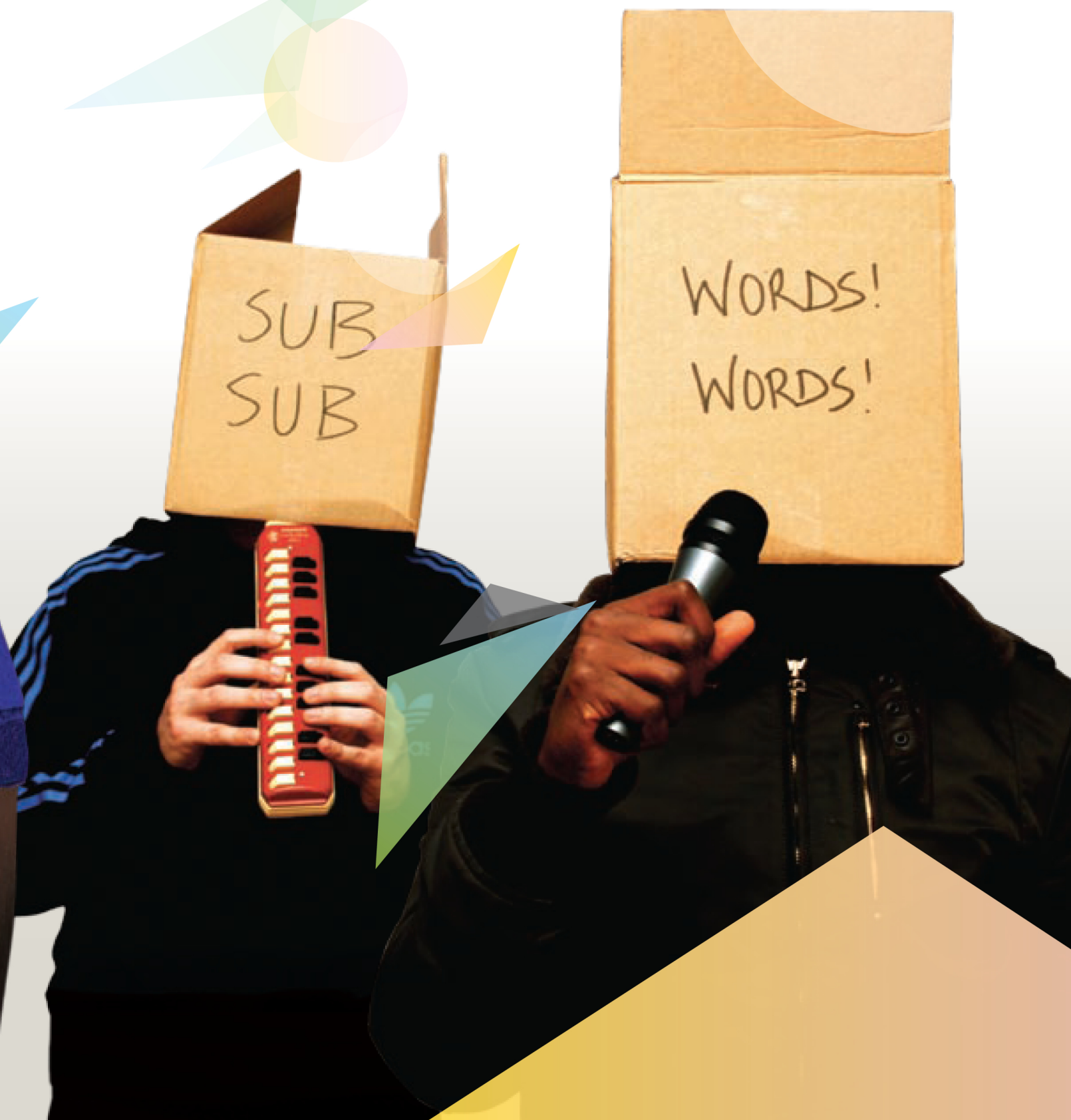


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XLR8R

115
MARCH
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Ed's Rant: Seeing Double



Strike a pose: Benga and Skream frame up photographer Georgina Cook in London.

The archetype of the electronic-music producer is a bedroom-bound loner who doesn't need anyone but his keys to press and knobs to twiddle. Though the artists in this issue don't see anything wrong with rolling solo, more often than not you'll find them in pairs, if not mobs.

On our splashy gatefold cover, you'll find a portrait of the major players in London's young and bold dubstep scene, who have (at least for now) overcome some of the infighting endemic to niche genres (*ahem*, drum & bass and grime) and are nurturing a family vibe. Don't think things are kind and gentle though. Our feature artists—best friends Benga and Skream, dynamic duo Caspa & Rusko, street soldiers Cotti and Cluekid, and dark knights Pinch and Distance—serve up some of the nastiest, most unpredictable bass ever. So what if they all get along?

While this makes a nice follow-up to our 2002 Horsepower Productions cover—which some credit with helping popularize the “dubstep” tag—some of you may still be shocked we've devoted our lead feature to such a small scene. First, the *XLR8R* staff couldn't be more excited about Skream and Company—we're constantly rinsing Rinse FM and tweaking out to the newest Tempa releases (especially when multiple deadlines are giving us that oh-so-pleasant punching-walls feeling). If you don't believe me, check out our podcasts or our new show on Scion Radio.

Second, you're going to be hearing a lot more dubstep as most of these dudes hit the States later this month. And if you know us, then you know that we follow what we like more than we do release dates. If you were hoping for a cover story on Cool Kids or Tommy Lee's DJ career... sorry, babe.

In a related twist, BBC 1Xtra DJ Cameo, a fixture behind the counter at Uptown Records (central London's outpost for dubstep, grime, and 4x4 bassline house), told me that most of the original U.K. garage producers—the progenitors, in one way or another, of dubstep—are now funky house DJs, and they're absolutely obsessed with New York house producer Dennis Ferrer.

Lucky for them, we tracked down Mr. Ferrer for this issue. We also find out what's up with his good friend (and erstwhile production partner) Karizma. This Baltimore bad ass, having already showed his dexterity with deep house, is busy injecting broken beat and nu-soul with a dose of the grit and individuality his hometown is known for.

And we become *PDXLR8R* once again as Portland-to-Baltimore transplant Michael Byrne travels home to interview the oil-meets-water duo known as Glass Candy. Prepare to get schooled on how the liver and the spleen manage to make sweet retro-'80s computer jams together. (You'll just have to read it yourself.)

- Vivian Host, Editor
XLR8R

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ON THE COVER

Skream, Benga, and members of the London Dubstep scene wrangled and photographed by Georgina Cook

SportLifestyle

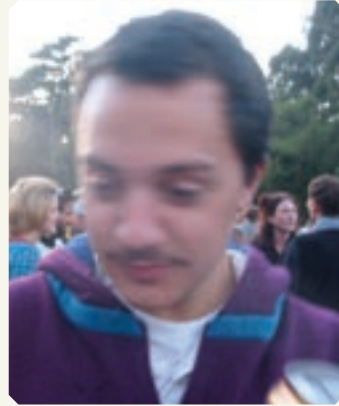
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Photo by Shaun Bloodworth

Martin Clark

Martin Clark (a.k.a. Blackdown) has documented the U.K. garage, dubstep, and grime scenes for *Pitchfork*, *The Guardian*, *NME*, *Mixmag*, *Hyperdub.net*, *Jockey Slut*, and *Muzik*. His blog won Press of the Year in 2007 at the Dubstep Forum Awards. As well as penning this issue's Skream feature, Clark has written liner notes for several compilations, including Tempa's *Dubstep Allstars* series. He co-runs Keysound Recordings with Dusk, on which the two will release their debut album, *Margins Music*, this spring. blackdownsoundboy.blogspot.com



Ross Holland

About one year ago, writer Ross Holland knocked on *XLR8R*'s door in search of an editorial internship. Maybe it was his brawny, Modeselektor-lookalike allure or just that youthful twinkle in his eye, but we took a chance on ol' Ross. Although he recently relocated to Prague, Czech Republic, we just can't leave him alone. This month marks his debut as a columnist with Make Space, taking the reins of the "oddball dance" section from Associate Publisher Roy Dank.



Michael Carbaugh & Collette

NYC-based photographer Collette and stylist Michael Carbaugh have been collaborating since they were in high school. They've since come together on projects for *V*, *Surface*, and *EcoCitizen*. Carbaugh gained notoriety through his Sandoval collection, which appeared in publications like *W* and *Purple*. When not shooting for publication, Collette is editing her Lucie-award-winning photo project on high-society working girls. They reunited for this issue's *Serpico*-themed fashion shoot. collettephoto.com



Michael Byrne

For most of his adult life, Michael Byrne has concerned himself with three things: hopping freight trains, sleeping in weird places, and writing about dance music for such publications as *Spin*, *Earplug*, *Seattle Sound*, *The Stranger*, *Metro Times*, and *Willamette Week*. He recently moved from Portland to Baltimore—"the greatest city in America"—where he has a "real" job as music editor of *City Paper*. Consistent employment makes it difficult for Byrne to hop freight trains, though he still enjoys dozing in sketchy places..

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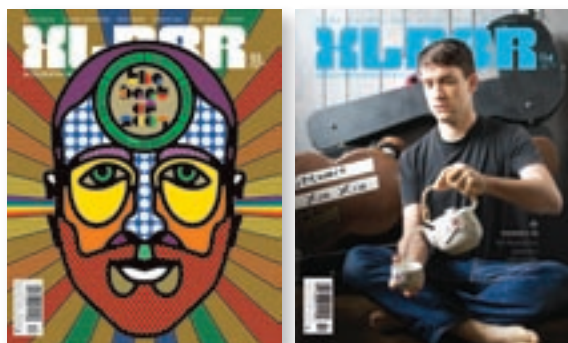
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Letters to the Editor

Got something to say? Love us? Hate us? Write us at letterbox@xlr8r.com or send mail to XLR8R Magazine, 1388 Haight Street #105, San Francisco, CA 94117.



December Issue #113

January/February Issue #114

[sic]-ness

Look, I love your magazine from a designers [sic] stand point, but I can't stand some of your articles. I don't want to read about no talents [sic] ass clowns making it big. I want to hear about the real artist who struggled to live, just so they could make art. People who made it, because they went through fucking magical journey to get fame, or even mentioned

in a magazine. Write about, how fucking expensive it is to be an artist. Write about places people can go to get arts grands [sic], and make money. Write about ways people can come together and collaborate on projects. Write about the little black girl and little gay guy who raised money to start a [sic] artist studio. Stop talking about these, I know one cord,

hipsters, with daddy's money and mommy vicodin. [sic sic sic] You have a Grandmaster Flash ad next to an article about White Williams... Come on! Sincerely [sic] JGreene, via the web

Digital Love

Hello! My name is Silvio. I live in Brazil and my English is too bad (-;-), but every month I read the magazine through the download in the website. The price of XLR8R is not very expensive here, but is difficult to find in the bookstore. I'm writing to give my congratulations to XLR8R for representing electronic culture properly, and for the easy access to the magazine through the PDF format. Thanks!

Silvio Romualdo, via the web

#113's "Person of the Year" Contest Winner

This dude Rick Doblin is the person of the year. He may look like a crazed relative of Richard Simmons but he is the founder and president of MAPS (Multi-disciplinary Association of Psychedelic Studies). Since 1986, he has been chipping away at our country's repressive and harmful (prison, misinformation, etc.) laws in regards to psychedelics and marijuana and he has made some amazing progress this past year with some initial victories in a lawsuit against the DEA regarding the inability to obtain pot for medical research and the shitty quality of the pot that is made available. He has also been a crucial player in the current MDMA studies taking place in South Carolina with PTSD patients. You can check him out

at maps.org. He has consistently pushed reason over fear and is a truly sincere and down-to-earth guy. If anyone can beat the DEA/ Big Government at their stupid drug game it will be this guy. Peace, Bob Cragg

P.S. You guys are the shit. Don't know what I would do without your mag.

Ken responds: Flattery will get you everywhere, Bob.

CORRECTIONS

In issue 114's review of Smif-N-Wessun's *The Album*, the group was mistakenly identified as being from the Chicago borough of Bucktown. "Bucktown" is the group's name for Brooklyn. In issue 114's post-card series, we mistakenly identified the Silent Barn venue as being in Brooklyn; it is in Ridgewood, Queens. XLR8R regrets the errors.



XLR8R's "March to the Beat" Contest

Snag some PUMA sneakers and a sack of hot new tunes.

We're so psyched about this coming election year—it's only primaries season and we've already got ants in our pants. 2008 will no doubt prove itself to be a red-letter year on the U.S. political landscape. For our March issue, we want to know who you're marching for, and why. To further the cause, our friends at PUMA are kickin' down a new pair of kicks to see you through the battlefields

and get you to the rally or the polling station. Our favorite labels are also helping to keep you motivated by offering up Klimek's *Dedications* (Anticipate), Caspa & Rusko's *Fabriclive.37* (Fabric), Ghislain Poirier's *No Ground Under* (Ninja Tune), Glass Candy's *Beat Box* (Italians Do It Better), Kelley Polar's *I Need You to Hold on While the Sky Is Falling* (Environ), Distance's *My Demons*

(Planet Mu), and Blue Note Records' *Droppin' Science* compilation. All you've gotta do is tell us who you're marching for this year, and why. The best entry will win the prizes above.

One male and one female grand-prize winner will each receive: A pair of PUMA USAN shoes and a copy of each of the CDs listed.

Entries will be accepted via standard mail and email. Entries must be received by March 25, 2008. Send your entry and shoe size (stating men's or women's) to XLR8R's "March to the Beat Contest," 1388 Haight St. #105, San Francisco, CA 94117 or email contest@xlr8r.com with "XLR8R's March to the Beat" in the subject line.

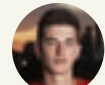




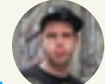



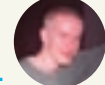



puma.com, planetmu.com, ninjatune.net, anticipaterecordings.com, vivaitalians.blogspot.com, bluenote.com, fabriclondon.com

BJ "Bitter" Bastard's "Step to Me" Dubstep Test

Okay, they're not as bad as Southern rap artists or happy hardcore DJs, but dubsteppers have got some of the silliest names around. So Bitter Bastard has assembled the following questionnaire to test your knowledge of the genre's complicated nomenclature. Your job: Separate each question's real dubstep dude (or crew) from the four fakes surrounding them. Now don't cheat by looking ahead in the features section!



- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>1. 
a) Yakka
b) Skream
c) Talko
d) Mowfee
e) Drummah</p> | <p>4. 
a) Burial
b) Deddy Wan
c) Fyooneril
d) Bird Killa
e) Undah Tekka</p> | <p>7.  
a) NKOTB
b) VVM
c) DMZ
d) STD
e) BBC</p> | <p>9. 
a) James 6
b) Mark One
c) Henry VIII
d) Louis IV
e) Kode 9</p> |
| <p>2. 
a) Lo-Flying Objek
b) Loefah
c) Loofah
d) Trowzas
e) Trowza Snak</p> | <p>5. 
a) Llama
b) Mala
c) Nala
d) The Lyin King
e) Brooza</p> | <p>8. 
a) GrapeApe
b) SpaceApe
c) Grapity Grape
d) Bape
e) Brap Dem Cru</p> | <p>10. 
a) Geeza
b) Bizzyah Den U
c) Wonda
d) Youngsta
e) Wizzywig</p> |
| <p>3. 
a) DJ Itch-E
b) DJ Poki
c) DJ Pinch
d) DJ Picky
e) DJ Proddy Beatz</p> | <p>6. 
a) Layo
b) Hacha
c) Fukka
d) Misha
e) Blinga</p> | <p>TALLY YOUR POINTS</p> <p>0-1 point: Bollocks! You've got to be joking!</p> <p>2-4 points: Better start checking Rinse FM.</p> <p>5-7 points: You probably own a signed copy of "Midnight Request Line"</p> <p>8-10 points: Safe man! Ain't I seen you down FWD?</p> | |

1, b; 2, b; 3, c; 4, a; 5, b; 6, b; 7, c; 8, b; 9, e; 10, d



Check out the line-up in XLR8R's first-ever four-panel gatefold cover, featuring London's finest dubstep artists: (from far left) Cluekid, Cotti, Youngsta, Benny III, Caspa on Rusko's back, Plastician, Skream, Benga, Kode 9, and Spaceape



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Beach House

A Baltimore duo stitches together a lush, languid masterpiece from ether and lace.

The name Beach House may conjure up bright visions of white surf and grainy sand, but the origins of the Baltimore duo's designation are, fittingly, much more vague.

"We were describing worlds that we felt described where we were at," says singer/keyboardist Victoria Legrand of their choice of names. "And we had a ridiculous conversation about a beach party on the moon. Then we realized it could be confused with a Jimmy Buffet reference and we couldn't go there."

It's a challenge to pin the music of Legrand and Alex Scally to one place or time, to accurately tag the duo's narcotized and haunting grooves. Their music exudes a shifting sense of location and emotion that, along with its echoing production, makes the band's sophomore album, *Devotion*, so enveloping and self-assured. Languid organ melodies and Scally's gently coaxed slide-guitar lines wrap around each other like kudzu, while Legrand's ethereal vocals and heavenly sighs pool up into dark clouds, lingering overhead like smoke. It's a lush, sparkling work, reminiscent of Legrand's own colorful, handmade jewelry (photographed for the cover of the band's first album). A song is as likely to remind you of a spacious Motown single as it is a sad Appalachian country lament. "Country for us is Gram Parsons, Bob Dylan, Hank [Williams], and Patsy [Cline]," says Legrand. "It blurs with Motown, that same kind of reverb."

The duo first began collaborating in 2005, after Legrand returned from a stay in Paris. Originally members of a larger group, Daggerhearts, Legrand and Scally split off in 2005 when the band started to get a bit dysfunctional. During a particularly spontaneous and productive period later that year, the two wrote the music that would eventually end up on Beach House's self-titled debut.

"It was very natural," says Legrand of the band's ease in carving out their signature sound. "That's just the way I roll—if I'm doing something weird, that's the way it is. I was sleepy-sounding, and I didn't mean to sound so much like Nico. I won't say we were lucky, but much of this stuff came together in one session. We were so intense about it."

The link between the albums is the track "Master of None," according to Legrand, which points toward *Devotion's* thicker sound. The cathartic track is a bit more ferocious, a bit more of the two letting go, she explains. It helped to point the duo towards a relaxing place they're still trying to fully realize.

"In Baltimore, you can pretty much forget where you are," says Legrand. "It forces you to forget about something. You don't need to censor yourself. It enables you to do your own thing."

Beach House's *Devotion* is out now on Carpark Records.
beachhousemusic.net





Clothes Captioned: Reason

A New York streetwear stalwart goes classy, trashy, and everywhere in between.

At the height of Hypebeast fiend-dom, Reason Clothing released two ubiquitous shirts—one that turned the Ramones logo into a logo for rapper Cam’ron’s Diplomats crew, another a parody of the “I Heart New York” t-shirt that says “Go Heart Your Own City”—and sealed their cool. While myriad rip-offs of the two shirts continue to proliferate on eBay, the NYC-based brand has moved beyond just logo tees and crazy-print New Eras. Their cut ‘n’ sew crewnecks, windbreakers, cardigans, and shorts are tasteful, well-tailored jams that you can wear if you’re 15 or 40, and their spring line promises fun summer colors, tees illustrated by Dust La Rock, and a new Jungle Stripe fabric that is the shit. “More often than not, it’s the fun, obscure stuff we do that people know us for,” says co-owner Jon Totaro. “Our ‘Hangover’ flasks, the articles on our website, the tee we designed for The Hundreds, or the interesting way we always decorate our booth at [the] MAGIC [clothing tradeshow] seem to be what resonate with people. It’s great because *those* are the things we really pride ourselves on. At the end of the day, anybody can design a cool t-shirt, but we apply that creativity to every aspect of our business.” *Vivian Host*
reasonclothing.com

To see more from Reason go to XLR8R.com/115extras.

Reason Ski Camo™ backpack

This bag is serious—enough hidden pockets to hide anything and a removable printed rain cover to keep your bag dry in the harshest of weather conditions.
(\$70)



Mini Dot Tech jacket
The print on this fully waterproof jacket is subtle enough to guarantee wearability for years to come.
(\$136)



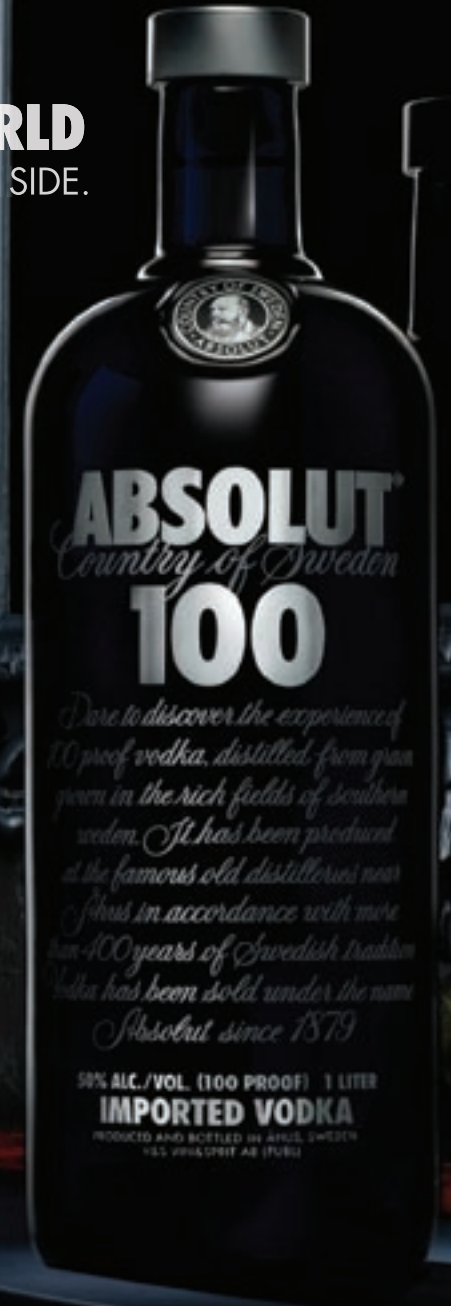
Go Love Your Own City t-shirt
An instant classic. Remember, we did it first.
(\$34)

Jungle Stripe board shorts
Our personal favorite. You’ll see us wearing these every day this summer, whether we’re on the beach or riding bikes through the East Village.
(\$70)



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Kelley Polar

A Classically trained composer takes his viola disco from the forest to the war zone.

Like virtually all musicians, Kelley Polar relies on playing live to pay the bills. But touring with his live band isn't his only source of income; he regularly plays viola with the Apple Hill Chamber Players, who perform in war-torn areas such as Northern Ireland and the Middle East.

Despite his pastoral living situation—he resides on a farm in Sullivan, New Hampshire—Kelley Polar is perhaps uniquely suited to playing in troubled areas, as his music, and his musical career, has been rife with conflict of its own. Polar—whose real name is Mike Kelley, and whose sister is Blectum from Blechdom's Bevin Kelley—had enough classical training to land him at Oberlin and Juilliard... and enough love for the wild life to get him expelled from the latter.

This tightrope walk between the diligence of composing and the dangerous hedonism of clubland characterizes Kelley's sound. While studying at Juilliard in New York, he met nu-disco revivalist Morgan Geist,

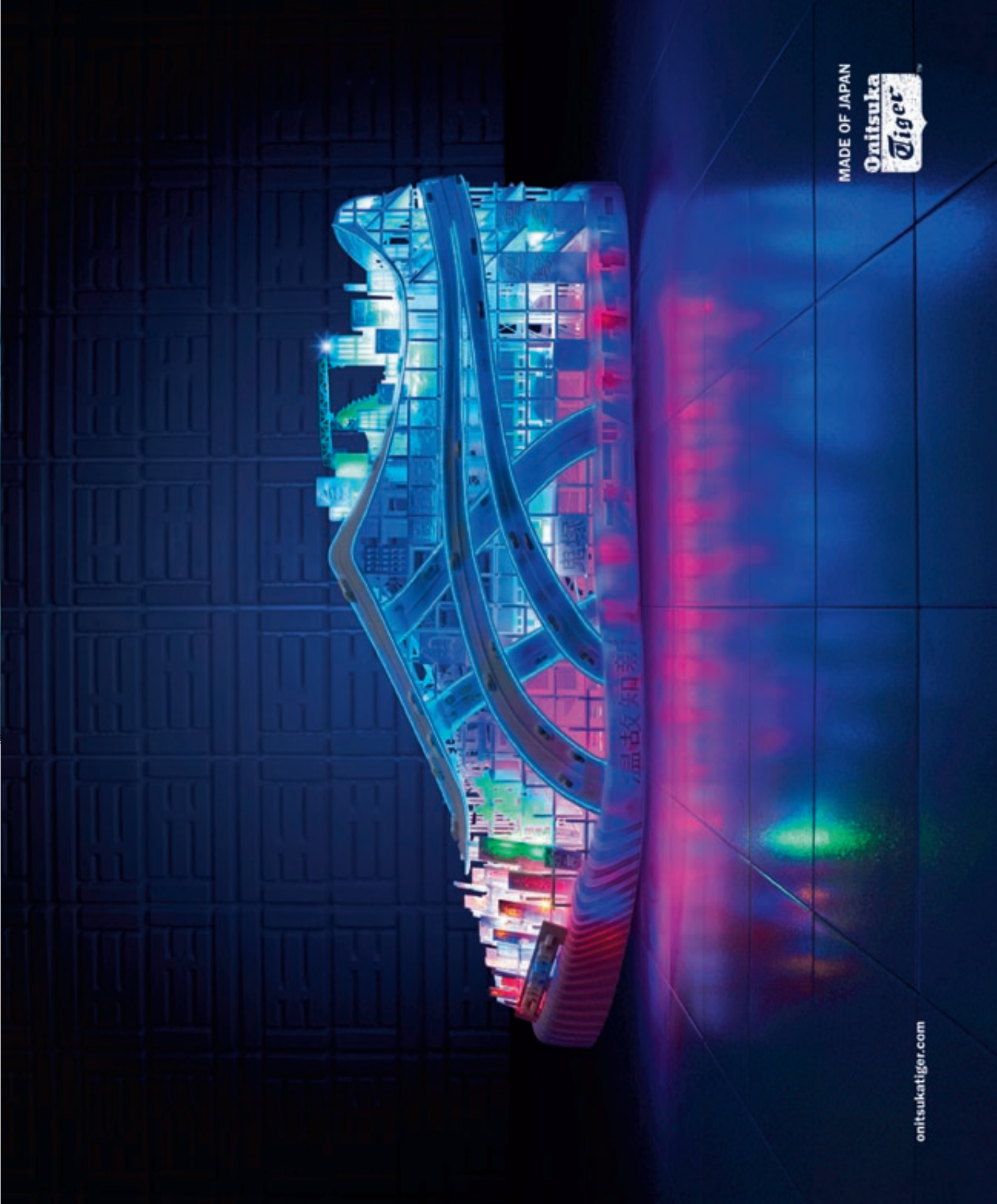
and appeared on his and Darshan Jesrani's Metro Area record, peppering tracks like "Miura" and "Caught Up" with his skillful viola playing. This led to his first record, *Love Songs of the Hanging Gardens*, for Geist's Environ label, a disco-inspired slow burner with plenty of classical strings and careful melodies.

Having retired to the countryside, Kelley now issues his second album, *I Need You to Hold On While the Sky is Falling*. From the deliberate delicacy of "Zeno of Elea," which takes a minute and a half before any beats interrupt the layers of vocals and keyboards, to the resolutely rubbery uptempo funk of "Rosenband," whose choppy synths threaten to spin out of control, the record shows an ambitious breadth of scope tied together by Kelley's hyper-emotive singing. Echoes of disco reverberate through Kelley's songs (though less so here than on his first record), contributing to a pervasive feeling of teetering on the brink of all-consuming decadence.

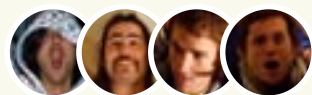
"An escape from the horrors of reality... can always be found in music—it's both inherently decadent (it's not feeding or clothing you, after all) and indisputably essential," Kelley writes, when asked to comment on the skein of depravity that underpins his work.

Contrary to *I Need You's* shiny, big-city air, the album was actually composed and recorded in his farmhouse cabin without running water. "I'm low-tech, but want everything to sound like [Stevie Wonder's] *Fulfillingness' First Finale*," Kelley says. "So I work and think hard to try to improve my production and recording skills... usually that means things like remembering to turn the heating fan off while recording."

Kelley Polar's *I Need You to Hold On While the Sky is Falling* is out now on Environ. kelleypolar.com

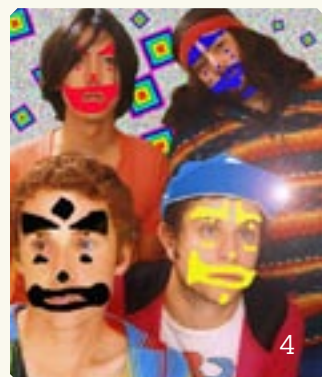


Health's Guide to L.A.



Words Health
Photos Health

So Cal's brightly colored synth punks celebrate the best places to eat, drink, and dook in Los Angeles.



1. Best sit-down restaurant: Vegan House, Echo Park
This is where the good yum-yum takes place, right next to the foot clinic on Sunset. We recommend the high-protein salad—spend the extra dollar, son, and get that “fried chicken” on top. Get extra tahini

dressing—you're gonna need it.
2. Best drank: G.T. Gingerberry Kombucha
Boochey... as in komboochey, and Gingerberry is the best. Insures solid a.m. dook despite how much beer and burrito you throw at it.

3. Best roach coach: Vons parking lot on Alvarado Street
So good. Spicy, spicy green sauce. The dook may be solid, but it's still gonna burn like track one on Rage's first album.
4. Best blog: Celebrity Juggalos (celebrityjuggalos.)

5. Best live show: blogspot.com)
All your favorite celebrities and local scene stars made over with Juggalo facepaint and Photoshop lens flares by a revolving cast of artists. Slayer redone as “Slaygo: Reign in Faygo” is the band favorite.

6. Best L.A. slang: “C&C Music Factory”
The C&C roughly

7. Best liquor store: House of Spirits, Echo Park
Not just everything you would ever drink (cept booch), everything you would ever buy. If you forget a birthday, they got you covered.

8. Best 7-inch: Abe Vigoda “Animal Ghosts”
So good, it's already sold out. It's the debut of their new “tropical” sound. Vigodies Mike and Juan are on the speed dial of setting the party off, 'specially 'cuz Mike brings Mika Miko skins girl Kate Hall, who is killin' the game when it comes to partying.

9. Cultural trend: Jumpstyle
Captain Ahab became Captain Jumpstyle and for two weeks everyone was on YouTube studying how to jumpstyle dance just like the Belgians. Then he left on tour and everyone forgot.

10. Best place to dook: The Smell bathroom
Don't be a wuss—just do it. Boys, hold your junk so it don't tap that eggplant



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what moves you

Artist on...
An F Thing



Rapper poet **Pedestrian** contemplates N.W.A.'s *Straight Outta Compton*, and their spin on rap's four favorite letters.

Words **Brandon Best**
 Photos **Will Boddington**



America, your Gs are middle-aged. And they've long since followed the vapor trail of white flight far from the block. Strange, isn't it, that in claiming Compton they were propelled from the flatlands to the hills, to tax brackets unheard of in South Central L.A.? And more, it was by reppin' Compton so hard that they found their way through the sunny vocabulary of pop to the profane shadows of language as it's actually spoken.

The soul of N.W.A. is the word "fuck," and it's more than apparent than ever on the 20th anniversary re-release of their seminal *Straight Outta Compton*.

Rap was born anew in 1988, amid the ruins of The Fat Boys, and its first mutterings followed from terribly perfect phrases like "Word to the motherfucker," "Fuck the po-lice," and "Let me tell you mothafuckers who you fuckin' with." With Ice Cube's "fuck," the Hays Code, which lingered in the psyches of record labels 30-some years after it withered in Hollywood, was overruled. Sure, "fuck" was uttered by mumble-mouthed Schooly D., image-conscious Ice-T, and single-minded 2 Live Crew, but it was N.W.A. that cleared the fields on which a half million Parental Advisory

stickers flowered, and N.W.A. who introduced into vestigially Victorian suburbs the play of the foul. A violent boy band, N.W.A. had the matching costumes of an R&B quartet, but theirs were from an L.A. swap meet—this was *convict chic*, anti-flash flash with an occasional staginess that somehow underscored their authenticity; there's something that seems *real* about tackiness. How else to explain the terrorizing effect of Cube's famously furrowed brow, framed as it was by glittering, girlish Jheri curls?

What was striking about N.W.A. in '88 was that they

parlayed their denim ordinariness into spotlit spectacle. They rapped in the boastful key of young men everywhere. They lit up kitchen-sink realism with the blunt glamour of adolescent male fantasy, and it is an injustice, of course, to hold a young man to his word. Perhaps the unsentimental innocence—yes, *innocence*—of N.W.A. was some large measure of their charm.

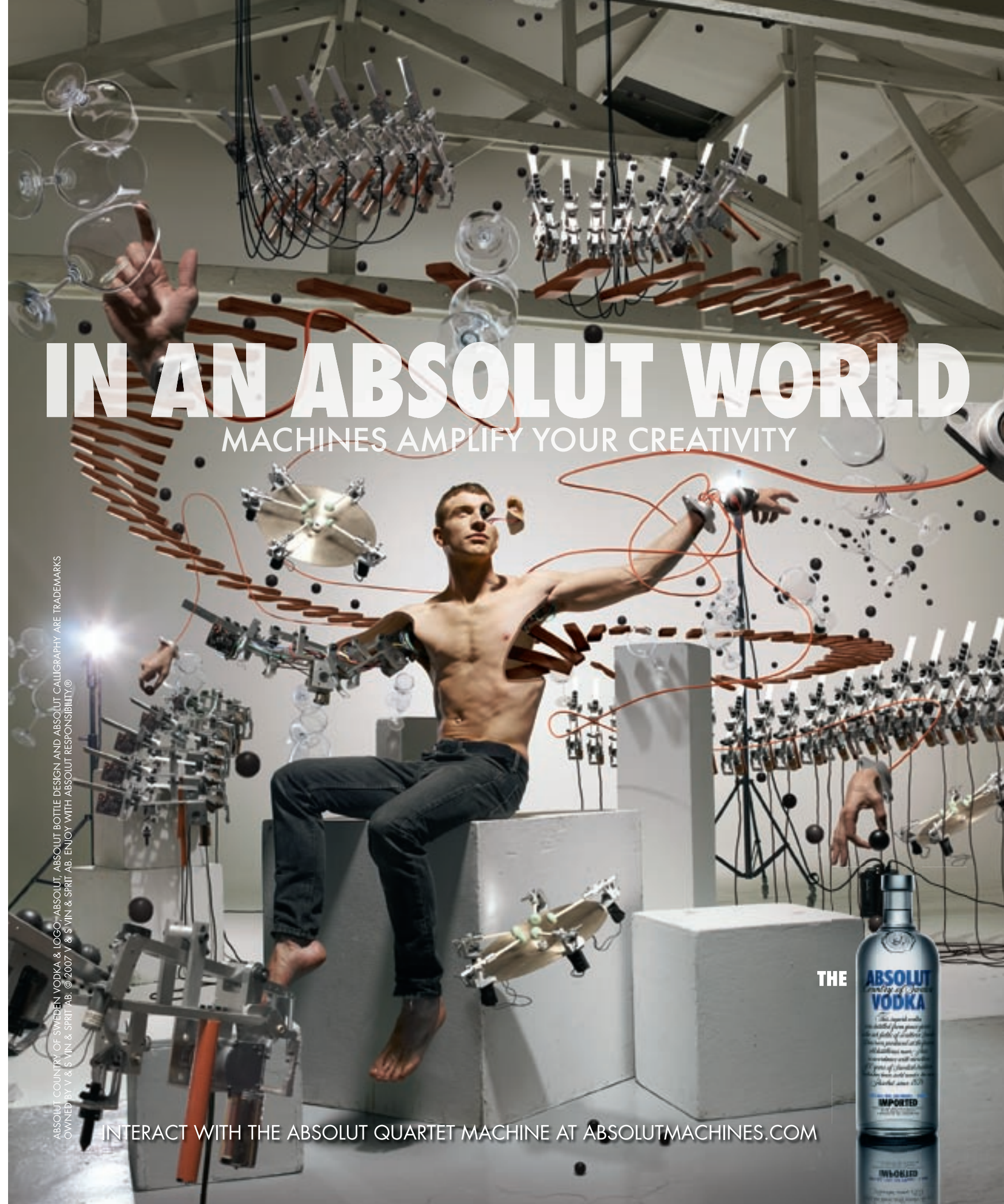
Gangsta rap has matured since '88—see Scarface or U.G.K.—but it could not have done so without its childhood in Compton, a photo album which rests on the coffee table of this album. Nietzsche wrote, "A man's maturity consists

in having found again the seriousness one had as a child at play." Why not freeze the moment in stone? I see four monumental statues in a loose quartet: Dre standing off to one side in calculating approval, Cube's incisors clenching his bottom lip, Ren letting a short breath escape, and Eazy screwing up his face for a cold plosive "ck." And at last, the mouthing of "fuck" is given its duly heroic scale.

Brandon Best records as Pedestrian for Anticon.
myspace.com/evangelistjbbest

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Valet

A Portland based post punk spearheads the vibe revolution.

Honey Owens is a vibe entrepreneur.

When she's not redefining the psych-blues template as Valet, the Portland-based, California-bred artist channels divine noise with heavy psych outfit Dark Yoga. A self-proclaimed "psychic surfer," she spent 10 years in the Ecstatic Peace band Jackie-O Motherfucker, eight years with Nudge (alongside Paul "Strategy" Dickow and Kranky Records promo man Brian Foote), and one year with the lesser-known project World. While weaving this cosmic interlocking circle of eclectic, often improvised jams, Owens also manages to co-run the record store/boutique Rad Summer and, up until a few years ago, was the booker and co-owner of popular Portland bar Dunes.

In January 2006, Owens finished and decided to self-release the first Valet full-length, *Blood Is Clean* (later reissued on Kranky). She turned to partner-in-vibe-crime Adam Forkner (a.k.a. White Rainbow), and together they reinvigorated their Yarnlazer imprint.

"Adam started the label in 2003 as a DIY

limited-edition handmade clothing-and-music thing," Owens offers via iChat, "but a month later, he went on tour with Devendra Banhart and then went on tour with me in Jackie-O, so by the time we got home the energy was lost." Since being reborn, the label has released a number of interstellar albums from the likes of Rob Walmart, Galactic Core, and, of course, Valet and White Rainbow.

Owens' sophomore record, *Naked Acid* (Kranky), finds the veteran experimenter wielding a less "jam-based" energy, and creating her first album of arranged songs. "I thought that I should maybe write 'songs' record instead of falling back on jams, which come really naturally," says Owens. "I got together with Mark Burden (Silentist) and started laying down tracks—he played drums, guitar, and bass. I like his dark side." The result is a cacophony of strategically honed drones, reverb-saturated guitar rhythms, and Owens' humbly transcendent underwater vocals (think Cat Power with a sack of peyote on a search for inner peace).

Owens' vibe has doubtlessly been shaped by formative years spent in Berkeley, CA. She dropped out of high school to hang out at legendary indie venue 924 Gilman Street and took up residence at the San Francisco office of the *Maximum Rock 'n' Roll* zine—basically, living the punk dream while keeping burn-out and sell-out status at bay. "I was *hella* punk," Owens reveals. "I am a super-late bloomer, which is why I'm so old and doing music still."

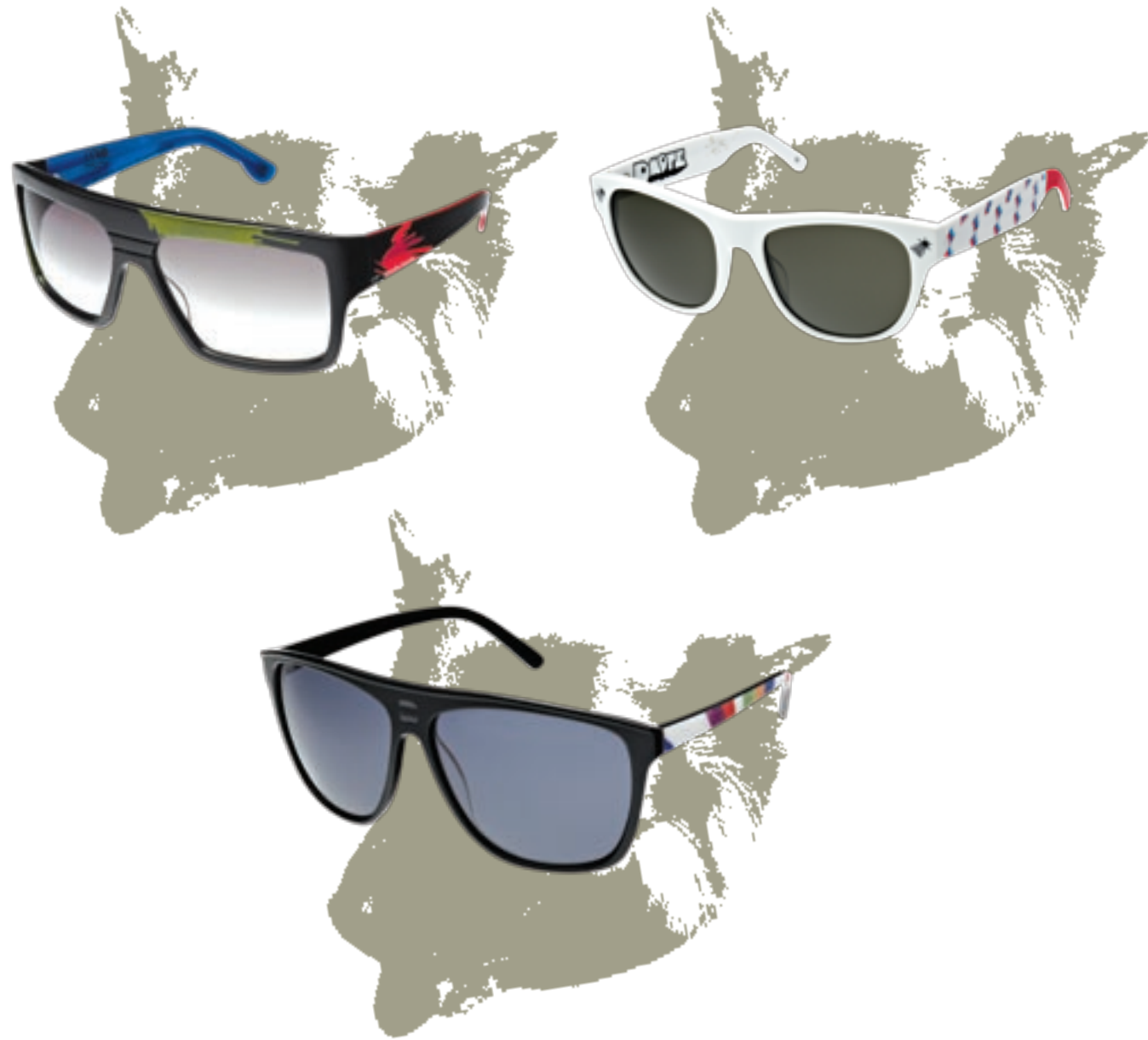
Now she's immersed in a mature, family-oriented scene, collaborating and touring with the likes of fellow Kranky labelmate Atlas Sound (Deerhunter's Bradford Cox), and finding herself smack in the middle of a fleet of projects she happily maintains, despite an absence of fiscal profits. "We sacrifice large quantities of money for large, sweet vibes," she states, only to question: "When is my benefactor going to show up?"

Valet's *Naked Acid* is out now on Kranky.
myspace.com/honeyowens, yarnlazer.com



Mad Shady

Colab invites the globe's cheekiest designers to create sunglasses from the future past.



Move over Wayfarers, Cazals, and stunna shades. In a move so simple and clever it's a wonder no one has thought of it before, Sydney, Australia-based **Colab** enlists the laikes of Eboy, Josh Petherick, Geoff McFetridge, and Perks and Mini to destroy—then rebuild—the

concept of what sunglasses can be. PAM took the cake last season, serving up plastic aviators with perforated holes across the entire lenses and frame, tortoiseshell broken nerd glasses that came with bandages, and the Afrika/Islam model, a revision of Bambaataa's

outer-space eyewear with removable lens stickers. The current collection—with most models priced in between \$150 and \$200—doesn't slouch either, with Dmote turning in white shades festooned with 3-D flies and Genevieve Gauckler dropping brightly colored ink

splotches all over class '80s-inspired frames. The future's so bright...
Tyra Bangs colab.com.au

 Check out more from Colab at XLR8R.com/115extras.



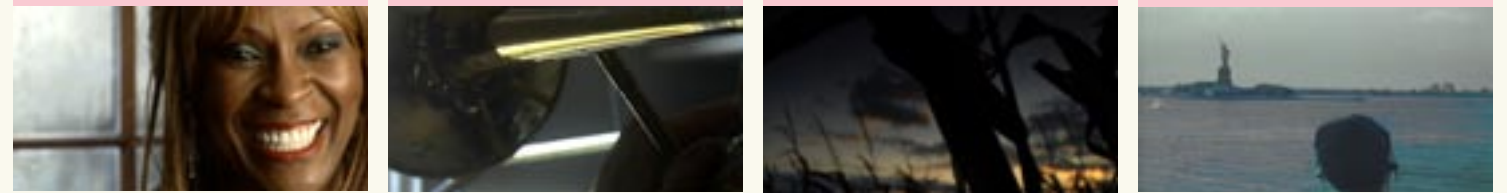
nixonnow.com/murf 

Mos Def and The Murf, right here, right now.

Of Cornfields & Disco

A Brooklyn filmmaker examines the undiscovered genius of **Arthur Russell**.

Words **Ken Taylor**



The phrase “ahead of its time” was tailor-made for the music of **Arthur Russell**. A classically trained cellist from Oskaloosa, Iowa, Russell moved to New York at age 21 in the early '70s, and took the city's avant-garde, rock, and disco scenes by storm. By day he was the music director at experimental art space The Kitchen; at night he produced disco classics like “Is It All Over My Face” and “Go Bang” under the names Loose Joints and Dinosaur L. He bridged the art and disco worlds with his avant-pop compositions under his own name. However, when he died of AIDS in the early '90s, he was still relatively unknown. That changed in 2004,

when Soul Jazz and Audika Records released compilations of his work, introducing his music to the likes of Jens Lekman, Electrelane's Verity Sussman, and 25-year-old filmmaker Matt Wolf, whose new film, *Wild Combination: A Portrait of Arthur Russell*, examines Russell's relationship with his music, his Midwestern roots, and his life and death in New York City. We asked Wolf about his own process of discovering Russell.

Ken Taylor

XLRRR: What made you decide to make this film?

Matt Wolf: A friend of mine in San Francisco recommended Arthur's

records to me, and it was [his] initial description that, even before hearing the music, made me think that this could be an amazing movie. He described [Russell as] this gay disco auteur in farmer-plaid shirts who would ride the Staten Island ferry endlessly, listening to cassette tapes of his own mixes. I wrote Tom Lee, Arthur's partner, saying, “I'm an experimental filmmaker and I'm interested in doing a non-traditional film scored to Arthur's music, and I wanted to ask for your permission.” When I heard from Tom, I went to go meet up with him in the same apartment that he once shared with Arthur, and I just really intensely connected with

him... The connection that he felt to Arthur seemed so alive and real that, at that moment, it occurred to me that perhaps a biographical film that wasn't just visually driven or experimental in nature would be possible.

You call your film “a portrait.” What's your intention there?

Going into the process of making this film, I knew that there were a lot of conventions, and even traps, of the biographical genre and also the music-film documentary genre. I wanted to avoid some of those traps and also try to think of new creative strategies to deal with the posthumous biography of the

under-recognized artist. There were a lot of challenges, particularly the lack of material of Arthur or any recorded image of him speaking, so I knew that I would have to take an unconventional approach. In doing so, I didn't set out to make a definitive documentary that interviewed every collaborator.... And I also chose to focus really extensively on his relationship with Tom and with his parents and the meaning of the landscape of Iowa in his life and his work—and the kind of iconography of New York City and water. All of these choices, I think, make the film much

more of a portrait than ‘The Arthur Russell Documentary’ or ‘The Life and Work of Arthur Russell.’

Is it hard to make a film about someone who's dead?

In terms of who gets to tell parts of his story, I chose people with a certain kind of empathy for Arthur and I think that's a big reason I rely upon Tom to tell a lot of the story—a lot of this *is* Tom's story. It's really difficult because there's a lot of moments where I definitely—in a visceral way—reckon with the death of Arthur. Through the process of making

a film, you objectify the material and you objectify the person so intensely, but there are these bursts or moments where you just reckon with the reality that this person died and how intensely it affected the people you're working with.

Aside from Tom and his parents supporting him financially, how did Arthur stay afloat while he was playing music?

There's this article about Arthur from the '80s that talks about Arthur's style of being an entrepreneur, and it's extremely

telling of Arthur... There's this anecdote about him, in the '70s or '80s in the East Village, selling t-shirts on a rack for like 25 or 50 cents each. Then a few years later, like, everybody in the East Village on St. Mark's Street was selling [the same shirts] for \$10. I felt like that was an incredible allegory for Arthur's struggle.

Wild Combination: A Portrait of Arthur Russell will begin screening at festivals in the spring. arthurrussellmovie.com



Kutiman

An Israeli producer channels the funk spirit, with reggae and Afrobeat not far behind.

Listening to Kutiman's self-titled debut, you'd think that funk has been an underlying theme throughout his entire life. Yet the producer discovered the sound just six years ago, when he left his childhood home of Zichron in the north of Israel to live in Tel Aviv. Thanks to newfound friends, his young ears were exposed to the wondrous sounds of James Brown, Sly Stone, and Shuggie Otis. Given the heavy grooves and obvious lean toward '70s funk and soul on *Kutiman*, the man also known as Ophir Kutiel has proven himself to be a quick learner.

"Growing up, I didn't really have the chance to listen to anything but the radio and some flamenco records that my father had," he says. "In high school I was introduced to classics: Led Zeppelin, Hendrix, Nirvana, Pink Floyd." His song "No Groove Where I Come From," a Curtis Mayfield-inspired jam complete with lilting flutes and soulful saxophones, is a tribute to those days.

There's plenty of groove on that track, not to mention every other one on the record. Soon after moving to Tel Aviv, the multi-instrumentalist joined an Afrobeat band

called Anikuki—without ever having heard a lick of the style. Someone passed him a Fela Kuti CD, and his life changed once again. "Shortly after this great discovery, I locked myself in the studio and recorded my album," he says. "I can find things that I love in any genre. If I feel it, I don't care what it is."

Kutiman went on a tear, consuming jazz, Afrobeat, and funk to complement his rock background, and it's most noticeable on heavier, percussion-led jams like "Losing It," featuring the screeching vocals of singer Karolina. To balance her caterwauls, Kutiman invited Elran Dekel, a more sensual and iconic-sounding soulster, to contribute to three songs. But perhaps the greatest guest spot is singer Chaka Moon's vocals on "I Just Wanna Make Love to You"—a track that would make Barry White proud.

Given Kutiman's penchant for wide-eyed musical globetrotting, don't expect a funk follow-up anytime soon. A recent trip to Jamaica with his good friend and musical collaborator DJ Sabbo yielded important inspiration for new projects. "It not only changed my

approach to music, I think it changed my approach to life," Kutiman offers. "The thing about Jamaica is that music is everywhere. It was the biggest music school that I could ever ask for." (Selling a few riddims to the Marley family will change a man.)

Besides his forthcoming reggae-heavy record—the result of nine months of recording and producing artists on the island—he's got a live Kutiman orchestra in the works (perhaps à la Quantic), as well as a new soundsystem for club dancefloors. In the meantime, we have his self-titled stunner to listen to. Recorded in his Tel Aviv apartment with Sabbo, it was chopped, spliced, and edited "purely on Acid." It's highly believable that he was lysergically aided on this kaleidoscopic voyage, but he is quick to augment his remark with "...the software."

One can only wonder.

Kutiman's self-titled debut is out now on Melting Pot Music.
myspace.com/kutiman



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• What Is It? **Powerviolence**

A quick blast of thrash guitars and noisy vocals from the late '80s.

By the late '80s, hardcore punk's "loud, hard, fast" rigidity had alienated many of the scene's originals. Bands like Black Flag and D.R.I. went metal-sludge; Ian MacKaye shifted to a melodic attack with Fugazi. But not everyone ditched the original sonic ideals, as exemplified by [powerviolence](#), a punk offshoot that sprung up in California around that time. Characterized by alternating sludge 'n' blur tempos, roaring vocals, and sub-30-second songs, powerviolence took the "hardcore" from hardcore punk and amplified it to occasionally cartoonish extremes.

The name "powerviolence" was coined in 1989 during a heated musical debate between Eric Wood and Matt Domino, then members of the band Neanderthal. Domino blurted out "fuckin' powerviolence," and the name later morphed into the location-centric boast "West Coast powerviolence."

"The peak of West Coast powerviolence hit around the mid-'90s," explains Chris Dodge, both founder

of the scene's homebase label, Slap a Ham Records, and singer and bassist in Spazz. "At the time, punk clubs in the Bay Area were catering to bands like Green Day and really crappy ska-core... Extreme, thrashy hardcore music just wasn't 'cool.' So I felt like I needed to intervene."

Through Slap a Ham, Dodge helped introduce hardcore fans to an entirely new aesthetic—one that challenged the definitions of punk. Releases like Man Is the Bastard's *D.I.Y.C.D.* subverted typical instrumentation, using a combination of bass-guitar attack with jazz/prog tendencies and experimental noise. M.I.T.B. included Neanderthal alum Wood on vocals and DIY electronics master Henry Barnes, who would later form the folk-noise project Amps for Christ. "[M.I.T.B.] was the most unique band of their day," says Dodge. "Their philosophies (not the least of which is in their name) embody the sensibilities of the scene more than anyone."

Other crucial releases on Slap a Ham

included No Comment's 1992 7-inch "Downsided," a definitive document of powerviolence's beyond-tantrum aggression. "Crossed Out, Neanderthal, M.I.T.B. ... All the best stuff came out on Slap a Ham," says Jensen Ward, drummer for Seattle neo-powerviolence band Iron Lung. "I don't know where I would be without Chris Dodge."

Neo-powerviolence bands like Iron Lung, who carry the torch for genre's ideals, are proof of powerviolence's lasting impression. Borrowing from the noise experimentation of the mid-'90s, bands flying the genre's banner have even fewer rules than before. "We get hardcore kids, metalheads, artists, noise fans, and even moms who know nothing about punk," says Ward. "We've always gotten a mixed crowd... anyone that feeds off real, intense energy."

Head to XLR8R.com/115extras to download this artwork as wallpaper. Find the rest of Derek Morris' 'What Is It?' series at XLR8R.com/magazine.

• Elements:
Extra Credit

A handful of spring accessories that more than make the grade.



1. Vinylux vintage record label coasters (\$18) vinylux.net

2. Boyce Rain Poncho by Staple stapledesign.com

3. Piu Piu bird magnet (\$18) shop.uppercasegallery.ca.

4. Chandel-earrings by Helpless Romantic (£18) helplessromantic.co.uk

5. Amanda Visell's Baby-Eating Crocodile from the Vivisect Playset by StrangeCo (\$7.99) strangeco.com

6. Pop 9 camera by Lomo (\$40) lomography.com

7. Cody Hudson t-shirt by Good Shape Design (\$30) goodshapedesign.com

8. Adidas x ProMama high-top sneaker (\$100) digitalgravel.com

9. Gravis Lowdown Hi-Cut LX shoe (\$80) gravis.com

10. Donna shoulder tote bags by Freitag (\$120) shopcomposition.com

11. Freestyle CNote watch (\$100) freestyleUSA.com

12. Gravis DJ bag (\$150) gravis.com

Sany Pitbull

Pushing *baile* funk further with the hardest working man in the business.

In the last five years, *baile* funk, long neglected and shunned by the Brazilian press and the Rio de Janeiro elite, has become an established music genre worldwide.

While there's no question *baile* funk can move a dancefloor, it has been criticized for a certain lack of depth; a lot of productions use the same sounds, usually the omnipresent (and relatively new) *tamborão* beat or samples from the days when Kraftwerk and Afrika Bambaataa were the genre's major influence. Even DJ/producer extraordinaire Sany Pitbull—the *maestro*, as he's known to his peers—agrees that it's time for *baile* producers to try a little harder.

"We have this romantic idea that we are 'magical' artists, that we are born ready!" says Sany poetically. "But without study and hard work, musicians—as much as a construction worker or a lawyer—can have all the talent in the world and they will always be missing something."

With his own label, Carioca Funk Clube, Sany is freeing the music from a lot of the rules it has imposed on itself. Meanwhile his party, which also bears the label's name, is

freeing funk events, often held in gang-controlled *favelas*, from their violent connotations. The club night—where acts like Phabyo DJ, Ba\$\$ Comando, and DJ Juninho perform—is described by Sany's partner Adriana Pittigliani as a "neutral zone to hear and practice *baile* funk, far from [criminal] factions or marketing rules."

Although Sany transforms The White Stripes' "Seven Nation Army," Guns 'N' Roses' "Sweet Child O' Mine," and Nirvana's "Come As You Are" into *baile* funk anthems for his live performances—which involve him going frenetic on a turntable and an MPC—his production work shows a great deal more innovation. Sany's EP for the *Baile Funk Masters* series, released through Germany's Man Recordings, is a milestone for the genre. It boasts new textures, moods, and sound sources—from the construction noises used to build "Funk Alemão" ("German Funk") to the Japanese gongs in "Tribos" to the Western-influenced "Faroeste."

Another major change is that the vocals have been minimized, putting more emphasis on the beats

themselves. This post-*baile* funk style is closer to the club music that many Europeans and Americans have been making, but with Brazilian flavor. "There's still a huge difference when [funk] music is made by [an actual] *baile* funk producer from Rio, as long as he studies a little beyond the limitations of the past," says Sany.

And, as far as he's concerned, things can only get better: "People from all over the world are listening to [the music]; that's the biggest change. I see the future of *baile* funk much as I saw it in the beginning, with lots of happiness and fun and freedom, but maybe with a little less social separation and some more hard work." Hardly a surprising statement, coming from *baile* funk's biggest workaholic.

Carioca Funk Clube, an eight-track CD, is out now on Flamin' Hotz. myspace.com/cariocafunkclube

 To see an exclusive hand-drawn illustration of Sany Pitbull, head to XLR8R.com/115extras.



IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO LEARN



INTERVIEW

DEEP, DUBBY, CHEEKY, METALLIC. XLR8R PROFILES EIGHT YOUNG DJ/PRODUCERS EXPLORING DIFFERENT FACETS OF **DUBSTEP**, THE LOW-END SOUND OF THE LONDON UNDERGROUND.

INFORMATION

PHOTOS [GEORGINA COOK](#)





WORDS MARTIN CLARK

WHISKEY

TO ———

CROYDON'S BOY WONDER **SKREAM** ON MIDGETS, MANIC FANS, AND WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE DUBSTEP MOVEMENT.

SKREAM

You can hear it in his voice.

"I felt like a king," Skream says, his mind racing back to that summer night last year in Barcelona. Just three years beforehand he would have been lucky to DJ to eight people. Now, as he looked over the decks at the Sonar festival, eight *thousand* people were going nuts in front of him, a sea of hands rippling like an earthquake in time to his sub-bass explosions. And the shockwaves don't stop there.

Two years ago, early in 2006, a tiny, ignored offshoot of a London dance genre started expanding violently. At first locally, but soon

internationally, the sound known as dubstep grew exponentially in popularity—and riding the front of the wave was Skream. "I felt like a king at Sonar," he continues. "I really wasn't nervous: I looked at it like a battle. I think it's like a moment when you realize your career is getting where you've always wanted to be. For me, the bigger the crowd, the more the adrenalin."

FROM CROYDON WITH DUB

Skream was born Ollie Jones and grew up in Croydon, a grey commuter town south of London that has little in the way of adrenalin,

save a reputation for lads who like to drink lager and fight on a Friday night. Skream left school at 16 and spent four years locked in his bedroom writing beats, day after day, alongside his friend Benga. Their music—with its clipped, dark electronic feel and ethereal melodic touches—found early fame when DJ Hatcha, armed with it, became one of dubstep's original innovators with his seminal sets on Rinse FM.

Now Skream's an international DJ (often described by the press as the "poster boy" of the dubstep movement); he's released his eponymous debut album, made a mix CD for

Rinse FM, and last year he spread his high-energy sound in clubs from Sweden to San Francisco. This month, he returns to Miami to make his debut as a promoter, putting on the first ever all-dubstep party at the Winter Music Conference at Laundry Bar with fellow dubstep royalty Mala from Digital Mystikz. Dubstep has arrived: Mr. Skream, would you please take its coat?

COMING OF AGE

Dubstep is an unlikely global phenomenon. Around 2000, the London U.K. garage scene, having tasted chart success, began to implode. Major labels got their fingers burnt by the flames of their own checkbooks and, following various tabloid-reported shootings, the hype evaporated as quickly as it had condensed, leaving the genre to fragment. Out of the ashes came grime, the dark dancehall- and rap-like variant that gave the world Dizzee Rascal. Equally dark-yet instrumental, DJ-focused and far more niche-y-was dubstep. So specific was its appeal that Skream *did* attend clubs (such as Croydon's Blacksheep Bar) with audiences of eight people, all of whom were DJs or friends. And while the audiences grew a little, by and large it stayed like this for over five years, incubating quietly at the genre's founding club, Forward>>, in East London.

Then, in January 2006, helped by a critical mass of exciting new tunes (the most prominent of which was Skream's catchy "Midnight Request Line"), the scene's key players came together on Mary Anne Hobbs' Radio 1 Dubstep Warz showcase—and the rest is history.

Since then the sound has changed from a tiny community of London-based producer/DJs to a global movement. Burial's albums top broadsheet newspaper polls and Skream has gone from hanging out with seven DJ mates to playing every weekend for months on end. And he sounds like he's having the absolute time of his life.

"This year I am actually trying to become sensible," confesses Skream. "Well ...," he pauses, before amusingly undermining all the good intent of his first statement, "sensible-er. If you're gonna get messy-well, I haven't *ever* followed this advice but I've got to start... that if you're gonna get messy on one day, you take the next day easy. But it is really exhausting."

Not to put too fine a point on it, but Skream has always had a bit of a reputation as someone who "gets messy." Gigs, fame, global touring, fans, free beer—add in Skream and it really should be a good night, no matter where you live. "I have got that reputation as 'Party Boy,' so I can't really blame anyone but myself," he chuckles.

ON THE MOVE

The rapid expansion of dubstep, as actively pioneered by Skream, presents him and the other DJs with a whole new world. Fame was previously anathema to this scene; and even when the sound first migrated into big venues, through Digital Mystikz and Loefah's Brixton-based DMZ rave, the position of the low-down DJ booth and the presence of all the scene's big producers just mingling in the crowd sent out a message of unity and community, blurring the boundaries between "fan" and "producer." But now when Skream visits Belgium or Boston, he's undeniably dubstep royalty.

"When I go out in London, I don't see it as anything different. I don't see myself as 'Skream' and everyone else as whoever, I see myself as Oliver. So when you go abroad it's quite hard adjusting, the way people stare."

Anyway, fame does have its funny side. "When me and Plastician were in Belgium," explains Skream, revealing his wicked sense of humor, "Plastician had just come off the decks and some guy came up to him and said to him, 'I think your set was amazing... but he, he is *the king!*' He pointed at me and I could hear him and I am *dying* with laughter at this point. I had to hide, I'm laughing that much; it was hilarious. But it was like [about the fan], man. Fucking hell, get a grip. Now I wouldn't say it, but I'd have that feeling if I was around Aphex Twin. I wouldn't go up and say anything, but if I ever met him I'd be very humble because there's shit he's done that is pretty mindblowing. I know people might feel that about the dubstep thing but it's different."

RISKY BUSINESS

When a sound explodes out of a community so rapidly, it's not clear what will and won't migrate with it. Sure, the music travels, but will the culture and the community, the extra elements that make it complete—this humility, this unity, the "difference" to which Skream refers—travel with it? "Someone was coming up to me and Mala and said they had a crew listening to dubstep from somewhere like Puerto Rico. And it was like, 'Wow.' They said there were only 10 of them but they were trying to spread the word. And what struck me was that the family element that everyone's got in the U.K. with dubstep has spread with it worldwide. People tell their friends about it. It's not like some boy listens to it on his own and not tell no one about it. You try and show each other the music."

The hype around dubstep is for real, but it won't be there forever. While the excitement of the new currently reigns, dubstep might need to draw on the experimentation and boundary-pushing ethos it was built on to sustain it. There was a sense at one time that

dubstep could be something different: part urban, part dance, with tolerant audiences not just desperate to get their rocks off to every single tune but willing to listen to risky tracks too. Digital Mystikz called this phenomenon "meditation on bass weight."

Yet in 2008, much of the meditation, and indeed the bass weight, is missing from dubstep sets. Certainly Skream's vibe has been all energy and hype. Many of the sound's original fans also find the music's newfound hardness excessive and overbearing, though Skream seems unconcerned.

"A couple of [producers] ... have gone real top-end, bass-less, like they've gone from jungle to drum & bass in the space of a year. Whereas I know for a fact I'm never going to end up like that. And no matter how mad Coki gets, there's always going to be that sub-bass underneath. It's okay, as long as it keeps that ... what everyone loves, that *whomp-whomp*." As for risk taking, he cites his amazing production "2D," dubstep's answer to Isolé's melodic microhouse anthem "Beau Mot Plage," as a brave element in his set.

Probably the most experimental move by the scene is the forthcoming U.K. Magnetic Man live tour, the secretive live project by Skream, his old Croydon mentor Artwork, and his best friend Benga. Together the three of them will take dubstep into its first truly live outing, with three synched laptops and limitless room for improvisation, their sights set on crashing the summer festival circuit. There's talk of getting the audience to wear 3-D glasses and something, well, quite different.

"The funny thing we thought of was to get a midget dressed up in cling film, like a little robot, to walk back and forth on stage in time, but I'm not sure we can get a midget to degrade himself like that," jokes Skream. "We could get the one off *Jackass*, he'd definitely be up for it."

Skream's *Skream!* is out now on Tempa.
myspace.com/skreamuk

"THIS YEAR I AM ACTUALLY TRYING TO BECOME SENSIBLE,
WELL...
SENSIBLE-ER."





WORDS TOMAS A. PALERMO

WIZARD

BENGA LEADS DUBSTEP'S PACK INTO ELECTRO TERRITORY, 250 TUNES AT A TIME.

ON

“My tunes are all about bass, rolling beats, and hooks... and they have to sound original,”

says 21-year-old Beni “Benga” Uthman, who is sitting in front of me in a cozy café in San Francisco’s Mission District. As befits his genre’s mix of reggae bass and rave abandon, dubstep’s electro warrior is rocking a red Diesel t-shirt with “Benga” emblazoned on the back; around his wrist is a bracelet of tribal beads, and a wild shock of hair juts from his forehead. At his side is 26-year-old Hatcha, a fixture among dubstep DJs since the early days of the scene, and the first to give Benga a break.

The pair is taking a day off during a U.S. DJ tour, which will see them stopping in Chicago,

Dallas, and points beyond. It’s a testament to how far dubstep has evolved over the past seven years, going from an obscure U.K. garage subgenre to a global music phenomenon. Now it’s not uncommon for German techno DJs and Ibiza party jocks to incorporate dubstep’s bigger tracks into their mixes, and crowds from Burning Man to Berlin love it. But few realize the influence that this suburban London teenager with Nigerian roots has had on dubstep’s expansion.

NIGHT MOVES

It’s October when we speak, and Benga’s track “Night”—produced with Coki from the DMZ crew—is the biggest-selling dubstep single of 2007, embraced by a wide swath of DJs from

the BBC’s Mary Anne Hobbs to Pete Tong to François K. It’s broadening dubstep’s audience to the same degree as “Midnight Request Line,” the groundbreaking 2005 single from Benga’s best friend, Skream. Like “Request Line,” “Night” features hypnotic synth pulses, roaring bass, and galloping beats that rumble like an elephant stampede across the African plains. “Me and Coki created ‘Night’ as a dubstep record, but now it’s an *everything* record,” explains Uthman.

“Night” is a good example of Benga’s style, with its clean synths and ample space between the beats. He incorporates techno, rave, and electro influences into tracks that don’t exactly sound like any of these things—more akin to a crunked-out Kraftwerk playing through multiple bass cabinets. Uthman finds influence

everywhere. "I start with a blank [computer] screen, and I can hear literally *any* sound, and it makes me go off into some next world," he explains.

Uthman lives in these next worlds, producing full bore; he reckons that he's made close to 250 tracks in the last year alone. Following releases on Planet Mu, Southside, and Hotflush, he releases his sophomore full-length, *Diary of an Afro Warrior*, this month (his first album, *Newstep*, came out in 2006 on his own Benga Beats label). The album covers myriad styles, from soul to techno, avoiding half-step tracks in favor of bouncy, dark-edged and electro-saturated beats that swivel and crackle with crisp synths and flanged mid-range bass.

'ARDCORE YOUTHS

Benga's destiny was partially determined by his youth. In 1991, Uthman's family moved from the Springfield estate in Hackney, East London to the calmer suburb of Croydon in South London. There the young producer laid awake at night, scanning the airwaves and soaking up the sounds of pirate radio. "I could be listening to happy hardcore or heavy metal and I'd like it," he explains. "I'm not really a genre fan, I'm a music fan."

Uthman was advancing in pre-teen soccer leagues, but quit to do music. He even skipped class to make tracks on his PlayStation. "I had my own mind [made up] from quite an early age," he reflects. "I knew that music is what I had to do. My mum was always like, 'What are you doing?' Any good mother would tell you to go to school, *innit?* But I knew what I had to do."

Uthman became a fixture at Big Apple Records in Croydon, where his older brothers (MCs Alphman and Flash B in the jungle and U.K. garage scenes) would buy their music. Hacha, who was a clerk at Big Apple, would let the preteen Benga use the store decks to practice mixing. Ollie Jones (soon to be known as Skream) also frequented the shop, and the pair began creating and sharing their nascent beats. "Me and Skream would make, like, five tunes a week and we play them for each other down the phone," says Uthman. "But we wanted to hear what they sounded like, so we'd go [to the shop]."

Both barely 15 years old, the two would bring tracks recorded on Sony PlayStation MiniDiscs down to the shop every week. "Every day they came in [to] Big Apple they'd have a new track," says Hacha. "I was the only one at the time playing [dubstep] on radio, so I was loving

every minute of it. At 14 or 15 I could already see the [talent] they had; they were hungry for it."

Benga's solo effort, 2002's "Skank" on Big Apple Records, showed how far Benga had progressed, from producing on a PlayStation to using a PC with Fruityloops to mastering Logic software by the time he was 17. It also arrived at the height U.K. garage's excessive, blingy, champagne-fueled So-Solid stage. Not only was the programming on "Skank" radically different—switching back and forth between a choppy soca beat and a half-time rhythm—but its production aesthetic "broke down the whole garage thing that you had to record in a \$20,000 studio with the best equipment," says Uthman. "What mattered [to us] was the riffs and sounds in the tune."

NEXT MAN

Indeed, it's the sound of the tracks and a desire to push forward that still drives Benga. "I still like to see what I can come up with next," he explains. "Sometimes I'll listen to a whole set of music, like [a DJ set from] N-Type, and I'll ask myself, 'What is there I can add to that?'" Uthman's quest for what he hasn't done is the common thread he returns to over and over, as if there's still a part of the curious schoolboy in him, experimenting with beats on the PlayStation.

And his friendship with Skream hasn't changed much either; though the two criss-cross the globe on DJ gigs, they still call each other every day. "One of the reasons we've stayed friends so long is we're never too serious," says Uthman. "We always joke around and play pranks on each other." Benga knows all of Skream's secrets but, like a true friend, will only reveal that "he doesn't drive and he's a Kid Robot crackhead! Send him something Kid Robot and he'll gladly give you all his dubplates!"

More importantly, the friendship continues to drive both producers. "I still like the thought of sitting down and making something *original*," he emphasizes. "That's what drives me to make music. That... and the fact that Skream's always making new music."

Benga's *Diary of an Afro Warrior* is out March 3 on Tempa.
myspace.com/bengabeats

"I STILL LIKE TO SEE
WHAT I CAN COME UP WITH NEXT."



CASPA & RUSKO

JAH BAGELS AND JAMAICAN BASS INFORM
A LONDON DUO'S PARTY-FRIENDLY SOUND.



Gary McCann's and Chris Mercer's favorite movies are *The Football Factory* and *Gangster No. 1*, respectively.

The first is a film about British soccer hooligans, the second a British gangster flick starring Malcolm McDowell as a seedy, suited badman who spends his time killing people and burying them under swimming pools. This is not surprising given one listen to their new *Fabriclive* CD as Caspa & Rusko. The DJ mix is just over one hour of in-your-face low-end, peppered with samples of cockney thugs and MC Hammer, and designed to appeal to fans of jump-up jungle, knock-out fights, and square bass waves that make you do mad squiggly dances.

"Each to their own, but our music is completely dancefloor," says 22-year-old Mercer, who was making traditional dub and hip-hop in Leeds before Caspa tempted him down to London two years ago. "It's got to be uptempo," agrees 25-year-old McCann, who has been making dubstep and dark 4x4 garage since 2001, along with running the Dub Police, Storming Productions, and Sub Soldiers labels. "The main thing for us is humor. Not like in a jolly way, but we like to throw in a few swear words or cheeky samples."

Tracks like Rusko's massive, stepping "Jahova" and Caspa's nasty, electro-and-dancehall-inspired "Big Headed Slags" perfectly meld their influences, going down like just the right combination of weed and alcohol. But lately they've been exploring mellower moods, too, as on Caspa's plaintive "Cockney Violin" and the uplifting, nearly New Age-y "Rock Bottom."

"We've only actually sat down in the studio together seven or eight times, but each time we do we come out with one of my favorite tunes," says McCann. "I usually hate collaborating with someone in the studio; with [Gary] it's cool 'cos [he] will just say, 'Rusk, that is so shit,' and vice versa," Mercer chimes in quickly. Though the two are very different—Mercer, a self-professed Squarepusher fan and "proper geek," is scruffier and more chilled out, while the lager-and-Timbaland-loving McCann is wiry with an aggressive London energy—they obviously get along well, completing each others thoughts so quickly that the net effect is of one unit talking.

While other dubstep producers brood over the music's subtleties, Caspa & Rusko pull no punches—these two are on some what-you-see-is-what-you-get, out-to-have-a-good-time vibe, one that's even reflected in their favorite foods. While McCann goes for typical London meals of pie and mash or Caribbean rice 'n' peas, Mercer recommends you get down to the Shepherds Bush Bagel Bite for the "Jah Bagel," which is stacked high with jerk chicken, BBQ sauce, mayo, coleslaw, and melted cheese. Perfect for your next beer 'n' bass hangover. *Vivian Host*

Fabriclive.37 Caspa & Rusko is out now.
myspace.com/caspadubstep,
myspace.com/ruskofire



PINCH

A LONDON METALHEAD AND A BRISTOLIAN DUB DUDE ISSUE THE SCENE'S MOST SURPRISING BASS MONSTERS.

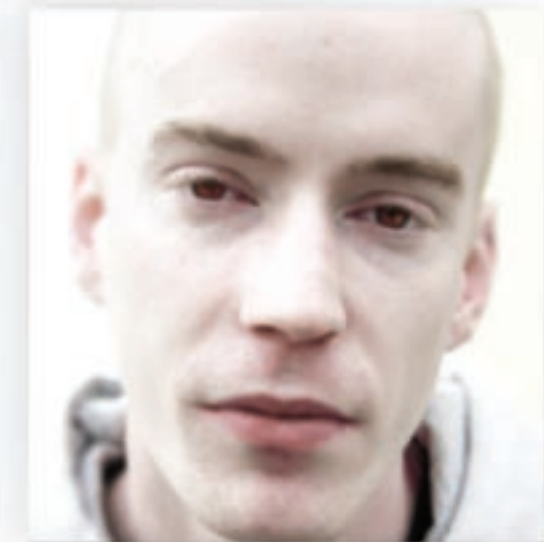
Both Pinch and Distance are dubstep iconoclasts, making deep contributions to the bass-powered scene while standing just outside the spotlight that's fallen on Skream, Digital Mystikz, and Kode 9. Distance (a.k.a. Greg Sanders of London) has a Jekyll and Hyde nature to his productions, balancing propulsive dance tear-outs like "Traffic" and "Taipan" with tightly wound, highly controlled creations like "Cyclops" and "Feel Me." The world got a taste of his metal influences and apocalyptic atmospheres on last year's *My Demons*, released on Planet Mu, and they'll get even more with the recent launch of his Chestplate label.

About two hours west of London, Bristol's Rob "Pinch" Ellis is busy running his Tectonic label, as well as producing some of dubstep's most distinctive records, including 2006's "Qawwali" (Planet Mu). While Tectonic releases from the likes of Skream, Loefah, Moving Ninja, and Hijak often show the influences of techno on the dubstep sound, Ellis stunned the scene with the November '07 release of *Underwater Dancehall*. Influenced by Bristol's deep Jamaican music traditions, the record is 10 stunning tracks (eight of them with original vocals) of slinky beats and deep, dubby bass. It's as close as dubstep has come to producing a dancehall album, and its unique songs landed it on many a year-end top 10 list. "It's one of the only albums I can listen to the whole way through," offers Distance.

These two producers' tastes for the more leftfield and boundary-pushing sides of the

genre means they often DJ together, pulling off a mini-tour of the U.S. last May, with dates in New Zealand, Japan, and the Ukraine ("I didn't know what to expect," says Distance, "but the reception was mindblowing.") Despite the world traveling, their favorite gig of last year was the two tag-team sets they played at the second birthday party of London's DMZ night. "They had to open downstairs in [London club] Mass to accommodate all the people who'd turned up and couldn't get in," says Pinch. With the sound expanding rapidly—and Pinch and Distance unafraid to take risks with their records—it won't be the last time. *Kid Kameleon*

Pinch & Distance's "Memory Loss" b/w "Sick" is out soon. myspace.com/tectonicrecordings, myspace.com/djdistancedub



Pinch



Distance

CLUEKID

A CROYDON KID AND HIS MENTOR SOUND OFF ON STREET BASS.



Two-and-a-half years ago,

Bullfrog Records owner Cluekid, a 19-year-old producer and *Star Trek* mega-fan from South London, had never heard of dubstep. He and frequent partner-in-crime Cotti, who runs the Bassface imprint, were busy churning out dirty, under-processed white-label tracks as part of the nine-member grime crew 4N Format. One day, the elder, Cotti—the son of Cluekid family friends—took young Clue to DJ Chef's house and changed his production course. "Cotti was talking about Skream and I never heard him before. Then they played me 'Glamma' and 'Midnight Request Line,'" says Clue, on the phone from Chef's house, with a new track they're working on blaring in the background. "I thought it was fucking big, man! Straight away, it reminded me more of the vibes of jungle and the tunes sounded more quality, so no need for MCs."

Cluekid and Cotti got deeper into the dubstep sound, unleashing the squelchy techno-fied ragga of "Legacy" and their brutal Barrington Levy version "Sensi Dub." Solo, Clue produces darkcore rave rinses like "Hovercraft" and Cotti's got grime MCs Doctor and Jammer dropping conscious verses on "Calm Down" and "Dem Fi Know." "Clue usually goes for a more tech-y, electro-y sound while Cotti's usually more dubby and more ethnic," says Chef of their respective styles. "And Clue can be typically a jungle guy, like old-school ragga '94 stuff."

"That kind of vibe is where a lot of my influence comes from, those punchy-sounding 808 subs," concurs Clue, who got exposed to jungle classics like Remarc's "R.I.P" and DJ Nut Nut's "Special Dedication" when he was about 13. Growing up with a guitar player dad, Clue had already been around music from a young age, jamming on drums with his dad and listening to his Jimi Hendrix and Who records.

He's yet to add the classic rock vibe to dubstep, though he's definitely mining his adoration of *Star Trek*, using Captain Kirk samples and laser sounds in tracks. And now that he and Cotti are putting so much effort into beats and basslines, he says they don't fuck with MP3s or CDs anymore; like most of the dubstep scene, the pair strictly plays vinyl and dubplates, which, at £30 per two-sided 10-inch, is no cheap endeavor.

But it's not really about the money for these two, who have plenty to come with their joint Minus -30 label and busy DJ schedules. "They're both chill," concurs Chef. "Clue's more disorganized; he just goes with the flow, just going deep and having a good time. But they're both cool, honest people, and they just do this music every day, all day, same as me." *Vivian Host*

Cluekid's "Toadstep" b/w "Round 2" (with Lady Arora) is out now on Bullfrog. myspace.com/cluekid, myspace.com/cot4n

SOULTROT

NEW YORK GARAGE DON **DENNIS FERRER** INJECTS GOSPEL, TECHNO,
AND OUTER SPACE INTO HIS DEEP HOUSE SOUND.

WORDS PETER NICHOLSON PHOTOS PAUL O'VALLE



Ask two people in the club who Dennis Ferrer is and you may get two completely different answers.

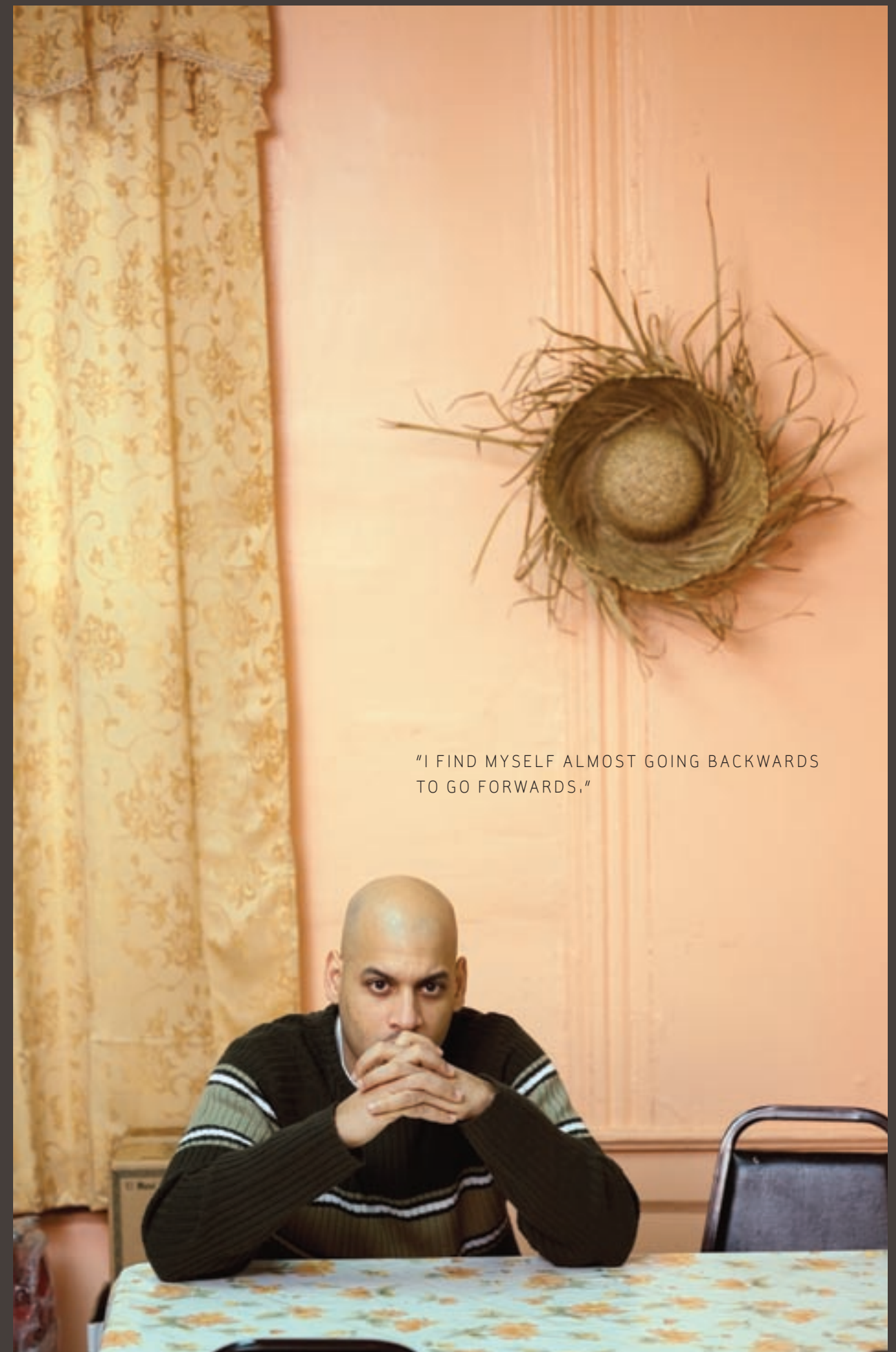
To an older house head, Ferrer might forever be associated with names like Kerri Chandler or Sfero Recordings and Afro-house tracks like "Orixas" and "Reach for Freedom." Meanwhile, someone who has recently crossed over into the world of house via techno might think Ferrer's story begins with "Sandcastles," the huge cut he co-wrote with Jerome Sydenham, or "Son of Raw," or his remix (with Abicah Soul) of Telepopmusik's "Love Can Damage Your Health." The man himself draws no distinction between his recordings in the early 2000s and his latest single, "A Black Man in Space." Ferrer says his music all comes from the same place—the soul.

Thus, Ferrer is not afraid to use "soulful house" as a descriptor of his sound. Actually, it was a vocal house track that inspired him to get back in the game. In 1995, Ferrer was working at Rogue Music in midtown Manhattan, selling musical equipment. He met people like Kenny Dope and JoVonn there, and also Kerri Chandler, with whom he became fast friends. One weekend, Ferrer accompanied Chandler to a party in Boston thrown by the Biscuit Head crew. "Everybody's screaming at him, 'Kerri! Kerri!', hands in the air, [and] Kenny Bobien's remake of 'Why We Sing' by Kirk Franklin [was playing]. [I had] one of those epiphany moments, where it's just like, 'Oh, shit!' I had that moment on the dancefloor and it was just like Kenny was singing to me. I heard it and I was like, 'This is the reason why I want to do music—because of this beautiful record.' After that, I basically bum-rushed Kerri's house!" Ferrer laughs.

Thus began what was actually a return to music-making for Ferrer. Having grown up in the Bronx, checking out hip-hop block parties and trying to sneak into The Fever club to see Run-D.M.C., Ferrer tricked his way into a record contract with Big Beat while still a teenager. He put out records with Tetsuo Inoue as OM for C&S in 1993 and with Damon Wild as Morph for Synewave and New Electronica in 1994 and then... he stopped. Sick of too much work, too little credit, and constantly being screwed over by record labels, Ferrer sold all his gear and went back to school to become a computer systems programmer. While he was in school, he took the job at Rogue, met Kerri, and found himself falling back into the music world. "They say it's in you, and I

didn't believe that for a while," says Ferrer about the drive to make music. "I used to say, 'Aww, you can learn how to play' but... that doesn't mean you can *make* stuff. It's two different art forms basically. It was just in me."

Ferrer made himself at home in Chandler's studio, eventually getting his own keys to the place and a room for his own equipment. In 1998, the pair launched the Sfero label with *The Lost Tribes of Ibadan*, marking the beginning of an Afro-centric sound for which the pair, along with contemporary Jerome Sydenham, soon became known. Ferrer also incorporated gospel into his recordings, catching ears with the rich keys and uplifting vibes of tracks like 2001's "4 the Children." All the while, he was remixing everyone from Robert Owens to DJ Pierre to Stephanie Cooke. "I take remixing like I take making my own records," says Ferrer. "It makes no sense to remix a good record. Why fuck around when somebody did it right the first time?"



"I FIND MYSELF ALMOST GOING BACKWARDS TO GO FORWARDS."

"YOU KNOW HOW YOU KNOW A PERSON AND YOU KNOW YOU'LL JUST BE COOL WITH THIS CAT FOREVER?
DENNIS IS THAT PERSON TO ME." KARIZMA



In 2003, Ferrer got together with Sydenham to "do it right the first time" and created the track that ushered in the second phase of his career. "Sandcastles," with its spacious drums, lushly deliberate pacing, and tense strings, crossed the boundaries between soulful and tech house, and soon became a standard in both camps. Though Ferrer continues to refine his Afro and gospel touches with cuts like "Dem People Go" and his remix of Blaze's "Most Precious Love," "Sandcastles" has been followed by a string of remixes and original work that combines soulful house with a heavy tech punch. From the rolling, jazzy keys of "Son of Raw" (played by Ferrer himself) to the leaden bass and crumpled hi-hats of "Transitions" (both of which were featured on his 2006 artist album for King Street, *The World As I See It*), Ferrer has melded the rich emotions of his turn-of-the-century work with the stark electronics he explored back in the early '90s.

"I'm a true believer in cycles," he says. "When I first started out I was doing very tech-y, 132-bpm stuff. And I left that and started doing very soulful music. And now I'm somewhere in the middle, so whatever I learned during those years with tech-y and electronic music, it comes in handy today. I find myself almost going backwards to go forwards."

For Ferrer, forwards means a new album for his Objektivity label, which he has used to foster new talent like Karizma and the Martinez Brothers. But first is "A Black Man in Space," a new Ferrer track under the Son of Raw moniker. "Somebody once said/That there is no soul in space," Ferrer intones over its booming drums, ragged bass synth, and ominous pads. "Somebody slap that fool," he continues before a ripping, urgent sax solo begins. Listen to the man—he knows what he's talking about.

Son of Raw's "A Black Man in Space" is out now on Objektivity.
myspace.com/dennisferrer

Dennis Ferrer on Karizma:

"If I had to describe him I'd say 'brotherly.' Karizma's mellow, but he has a good time when he needs to have a good time. He's definitely the mellower of the two of us. He's done a couple tracks that are my favorites—this remix of "Hang Around" [by Ben Westbeech] and this edit of the Herb Martin record on Ibadan, "Soul Drums." His drums are always on point, he's got ridiculous drum sounds—that boy is bad-ass with drums! He never finds himself in too much trouble. You know, you got some kind of people who are just ridiculously retarded, like get fucked up and do crazy shit? K's not like that. That's one of the good things about that brother right there—even if it's quite boring! He's actually solid, that's why I love him so much. People say he's up-and-coming but he's been around forever; people just haven't dug. He was down with the Basement Boys a long time ago and they made incredible records back then. If anything, I wish him longevity. That's the best thing anybody can wish for their brother."



Kindred Spirit

Dennis Ferrer collaborator Karizma puts Baltimore grit and grime into artfully broken house.

Last year was truly big for Chris “Karizma” Clayton, Baltimore, Maryland’s laid-back and thoughtful proponent of drummy, deep house and artfully broken beats.

He released mix CDs for NRK and Soul Heaven, and remixes for a spectrum of international labels, including Defected, Yoruba, Sonar Kollektiv, Compost, and Raw Fusion. He also proudly issued his debut full-length, *A Mind of Its Own*, on R2. “The album was a really big extension of myself musically,” explains Clayton, at home in Charm City after a two-month DJ tour in Europe. “Everything I wanted to do is all in the album: broken, hip-hop, moody stuff.”

This DJ tour might not have been possible without the record catching the ears of BBC radio DJs and broken-beat tastemakers Gilles Peterson and Benji B, who showed tons of love to his hypnotic, percussive workout “Twyst This.” The timing couldn’t have been better, as Karizma says he’s trying to “slip away” from the house scene. “You really can’t please the house crowd,” he explains. “No matter what music you do someone’s always saying something like, ‘You changed your style, you’re trying to do this now.’ If you stay at the same place you were two or three

years—or even a day—ago, then you’re not growing.”

Karizma is no new face in the game. He debuted on the Baltimore scene at age 13, DJing small house parties and fashion shows. A stint as a hip-hop DJ on Morgan State University’s college radio station led him to link up with local house staples Pope and Oji, and Basement Boy and Code Red Recordings owner DJ Spen. Karizma and Spen began recording under the Basement Boys moniker, starting with a remix of Mary J. Blige’s “Beautiful.” “I was like, ‘Dude, let’s take over! We could be the next Masters at Work!’,” recalls Clayton. Though they didn’t reach MAW’s ubiquitous status, their partnership led to over 30 mix collaborations and numerous original productions. Along the way, Karizma even made a few rough ‘n’ ready breakbeat-house-meets-Baltimore-club EPs (as K-Man) for Scottie B’s Unruly Records label.

These days, he’s working with West London’s Simbad as Izmadab (an edgy, deep house-influenced project), with Canadian producer Martino in the Masters at Work-informed Soul Intentions, and with New York soulful house don Dennis Ferrer.

His production partners are quick to sing his praises. “He knows how to bring the vibe on the

dancefloor and beyond with his beats,” explains Simbad. “Somehow, most of his productions have a timeless element to them.”

Martino concurs: “He appreciates beautiful melody and chord progressions. At the same time, the raw, grimy edge has to be there as well—almost instinctually. Few people can get as dirty as he does.”

Perhaps those raw drums and grimy edges popping up in the music are a testament to Karizma’s Baltimore roots, or maybe it’s the musical aggression of a producer fiercely doing things his way. “He’s a genius—his shit is hot and he’s a great DJ,” says longtime Baltimore club DJ/producer Scottie B, “but Karizma has to be by himself. He has his own vision and it has to be that way.”

Staying true to that vision means moving on when the time is right, says Clayton. “You gotta change within yourself musically. Even if people don’t follow you, it’s just something you gotta do for yourself.”

myspace.com/karizmaproductions



Read more of our interview with Karizma at XLR8R.com/115extras.

BEATPORT EXCLUSIVE DIGITAL RELEASES



- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| A Dirt Crew | 'Boogie Down' | Dirt Crew Recordings |
| B Jona | 'Manta' | Get Physical |
| C Hatiras & Jelo | 'Donkey Punch' | Hatrax |
| D Kevin Yost | 'The Jazz Influence 3' | I Records |
| E Ralph Falcon | 'Break You' | Nervous Records |
| F Martin Landsky | 'Man High' | Poker Flat |
| G Midfield General | 'General Disarray' | Skint |
| H Sharam | 'Secret Parkway' | Yoshitoshi |
| I Co. Lab | 'Music Box' | Saw Recordings |

beatport



KNOCKOUT



GLASS CANDY'S IDA NO AND JOHNNY JEWEL MAKE MYSTICAL DEATH DISCO THAT'S ALWAYS ONE SHARD AWAY FROM TOTALLY BROKEN.

ALISSA

WORDS MICHAEL BYRNE PHOTOS RUTH RADELET



"EVERY TIME I RECORD A SONG, I WONDER IF [IT'S] GOING TO BE THE LAST," — JOHNNY JEWEL

Glass Candy's Ida No is the lucky sort of person that can slip in and out of the world like it's a state of mind. In a room with her you start to think she's more of a phantasm than anything flesh and blood, it's as if you turned too fast to pull her in from your vision's periphery, there'd suddenly be nothing there but a billowing curtain or floorboard creak.

When she talks, it's in the abstract. Concrete answers don't emerge, just ideas, and Ida speaking the way a spiritual observer or spectral translator might. I ask about her lyrics—which can sound morbid, longing, like she's so in touch with a dark place. "They're happy songs," she says dreamily. "They happen after a resolution or something. Maybe like after a really long meditation. It's a bright moment."

REACHING BEYOND

The more eyes on Ida, the more she materializes. On stage, she appears as either an unhinged post-everything savage or an archetype of sexy cool, depending on whatever phase this continually progressing band is in. (On their 2003 debut, *Love Love Love*, they were consumed with guitar-ravaged No Wave; their most recent record, November 2007's *Beat Box*, is an icy disco memoriam.) According to producer Johnny Jewel, the pair is just as likely to take on hip-hop next. And if they do, Ida No will continue to be, almost more than almost anyone in music, a materialization—a projected image of Jewel's sonic fantasy, a grainy night-vision photo held together by an affection for Ziggy

Stardust-esque glam.

Johnny Jewel handles almost everything earthly related to Glass Candy, from managing the band to recording and producing. He's quick to go on about equipment, explaining his gear—a lot of synths, drum pads, never a computer—like a parent talks about their kid. He's also quick to go on about the ethos of the label he co-runs with Mike Simonetti, *Italians Do It Better*: no outside management, no PR, the bands are always in full control. He can spend 150 hours on a beat—he works based on a 30-hour day (read: until total exhaustion)—tweaking and

obsessing, crossing his fingers that when he gets together with Ida No to actually make the song, she's written a vocal part that syncs perfectly. "I won't let her sing on a beat if I don't like what she's singing," he tells me in Ida's almost disturbingly well-kept Portland apartment (as if when no one else is there, she disappears). "She won't sing on a beat if she doesn't like it," he admits.

Straining across the couch to grab a silver-blue Christmas tree bulb, Johnny explains, "The songs are like this; the songs are made from the reach." And the reaching is endless—the two estimate they've only met perfectly in the middle of the songwriting process less than 10 times (in over 10 years).

BODY TALK

Talking about Glass Candy, Ida No and Johnny Jewel both become mystics, twinned spiritualists in their own strange orbit. In the five seasons of Chinese philosophy, he's the liver and she's the spleen; he's spring and she's the season with no name, floating among the other seasons. Sometimes it's referred to as "Indian summer" and sometimes it's just the "center." "A spring



“I AM AN INDIAN SUMMER RHYTHM.”

IDA NO

person’s style of speaking kind of has a shout to it. Spring has the energies of bursting forth no matter what; like ‘I’m going to be born into the world no matter,’” Ida explains, grinning at Jewel. You can tell she studies this stuff, and that, maybe, he doesn’t have much of a choice. You also get the feeling she has an ever deeper well of mystical polarities she could draw from; there are brief mentions of something Mayan, hot and cold personalities, and something else that would take an extra 500-word primer on acupuncture to understand.

With a hint of mirth, she goes on. “I am an

Indian summer rhythm. The voice is more soft and singing. It’s a really common syndrome in America that people have really congested, angry livers. And they basically attack the spleen.” If Jewel is the liver, there’s a hint at what it’s like in the studio for Glass Candy, an ugly-sounding event he describes simply as “pretty stormy.”

“Every time I record a song, I wonder if [it’s] going to be the last,” says Jewel.

But, after 11 years, that hasn’t happened. Glass Candy has gone from being a pair of awkward Portland artists making music that had as much to do with weird electronics as post-grunge, to the

poster children for a new breed of acts exploring locked-in-the-mortuary disco and obscure early ’80s electro-funk.

WHAT IS NOT

Not bad for something that all started in a Fred Meyer grocery store. Johnny was working the produce section and Ida was buying carrots for her rabbit. They talked, and something clicked. They’d known each other for a week before they moved in together, each still working on their own musical projects. They dated for a time but “the liver killed the spleen,” explains Ida matter-of-

factly. Eventually, the band she was in broke up and Johnny Jewel approached a “distraught” Ida, saying simply “I would like to be your robot.”

They started with the idea to make the music they make now, more a morbid, minor-key take on disco than the “Italo” tag they so often get stuck with. Early incarnations, however, yielded what Johnny calls “Nico-y darkwave with disco beats.”

“We sucked so bad we just sounded punk,” he adds.

So, Glass Candy just made punk, and the critics called it No Wave, tossing out references to The Contortions and Lydia Lunch as if Glass Candy came from the same womb. The truth is, neither No Wave nor punk nor broken disco quite describes Glass Candy’s sound, although strands of these genres’ difficult, decadent DNA

are woven throughout this band’s 10-plus years of trouble.

Though happy days are hardly here, neither bandmate seems surprised that Glass Candy is finally hitting its ice-blue stride, with Jewel’s unpredictable nocturnal thump finally matching Ida No’s inward-gazing meta-poetry of love and death. With a shrug, Johnny Jewel says, “The body needs both the spleen and the liver.”

Glass Candy’s *Beat Box* is out now on Italians Do It Better. myspace.com/glasscandy, myspace.com/italiansdoitbetterrecords

Ida’s Tape for Johnny

God, help me out with this. *Smelly, both me & Brian.*

The Normal “Warm Leatherette”
“Quick...let’s make love...before we die!” Hey, calm down. Patience is a virtue. We’re in a band, not a burning automobile.

Johnny Cash “Ring of Fire”
“I fell into a burning ring of fire. I went down, down, down, and the flames went higher.” Everyone who knows Johnny experiences this feeling daily.

Olivia Newton-John “Have You Never Been Mellow?”
“There was a time when I was in a hurry; as you are, I was like you. I don’t mean to

make you frown, I just want you to slow down.” Everyone who knows Johnny tells himself this daily.

Bill Conti “Theme From Rocky”
Go to your corner and come out swinging. He’s so pressed for time, he usually skips the corner, and he never stops swinging... even in his sleep.

Diana Ross “Do You Know Where You’re Going To”
Do we know where we’re going to? Hell is not an actual place that some force outside yourself sends you to—it’s a state of

mind. We’ve learned this together. I’m so glad everyday we decide to keep smiling, no matter what life is showing us.

Survivor “Eye of the Tiger”
Johnny’s so focused, it’s almost frightening. He keeps a tiger’s-eye stone around his neck constantly. No heat in the studio and holes in his shoes, and he still skips his Wheaties while putting in a 20-hour day. The trouble is he doesn’t know when he’s having a food crisis, and, oh boy, does he get crabby.

Judy Collins “Send in the Clowns”
No matter how trying life can get, Johnny can always make me laugh in the middle of it, which reduces huge troubles to silly inconveniences. We’re so lucky for our lives. Johnny always helps me remember that life is just a game. What more do you need in a friend?

Boots Randolph “Yakety Sax” (The Benny Hill Theme Song)
He’s as funny as that!

Johnny’s Tape for Ida

“IT Ain’t WHAT You Do... IT’S THE WAY THAT YOU DO IT”

I Dream of Jeannie Theme Song
Basically anything with flutes, chimes, or a horn section is a hit with Ida. This is probably what she hears in her head when she’s going jogging or doing yoga.

“Row, Row, Row Your Boat” (Traditional)
“Life is but a dream.” This is Ida’s theme song. “Gently down the stream.” Ida honestly believes this is possibly the best song ever written.

“I Wish I Were an Oscar Mayer Weiner” (Commercial Peel Session)
Bill collectors can’t harass you when you’re an Oscar Mayer weiner. And no one asks you to give the second verse one more try when you’re an Oscar Mayer weiner. Ida would be 100 percent content.

“Silent Night” (Traditional)
“All is calm.” She loves the night to be silent. And I only make beats at night. So we don’t live together anymore. Anyone in their right mind wouldn’t want to hear me trying to find the perfect snare sound for 13 hours straight. Who can blame her?

John Paul Young “Love Is in the Air” (Mike Simonetti’s White Label Version)
This is written on Ida’s oxygen tank she keeps backstage. When Mike spins records at our shows he always plays this song. Ida immediately lights up and starts doing this fucked-up dance. I can’t describe it. It’s like clockwork. Since we made the rule that Glass Candy members had to be air signs it’s been smooth sailing.

NO NO

RIDING THE THIRD WAVE OF **NO WAVE**, AUTHORS AND ARTISTS DOCUMENT

THE NO

THE DOWNTOWN NYC DIASPORA,

WAVE

Whether it's the recent reissue of *Downtown '81*, the perennial appeal of Jean-Michel Basquiat's paintings, the release of *Disco Not Disco* (a compilation featuring "post-punk, electro, and leftfield disco classics" from Delta 5, Konk, James White and The Blacks, and more), or a new disc from The Bush Tetras, there's no doubt a No Wave revival is afoot. Not only are the period's music compilers busy, but new books on the scene's continued relevance and its niche underground cinema are on the horizon, lending credence and understanding to the movement spawned by the mantra "Just say no." Here *XLR8R* revisits No Wave's legendary films, clubs, and bands through the lens of its chroniclers and participants. *Ken Taylor*

No Future

No means yes, according to Marc Masters' new book about No Wave's rock nihilism.



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Arto Lindsay of DNA

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It sounds like a counter-culture fairytale. In late '70s and early '80s Manhattan (a burnt-out bohemia before Giuliani and gentrification), an uninhibited, nihilistic music scene quickly formed, flourished, and flamed out.

No Wave (Black Dog Publishing; softcover, \$29.95) by Marc Masters distills the essence of this vital movement, when a slew of energetic and eclectic artists like ESG, Lydia Lunch, and The Contortions created unique (at times primitive) music that deconstructed rock. "You can do so much more when you reject everything," offers Masters.

While No Wave influenced countless bands, it's easy to misstate the depth of talent involved. Masters' lengthy analyses and first-hand accounts fill in the gaping holes in the historical record with artist testimony, profiles of neglected groups and albums, rare photos, fliers, fanzines, and the occasional quote from a *New York Times* review. Here we asked Masters to tell us about five musical touchstones from that era. *Patrick Sisson*

No Wave is out now from Black Dog Publishing. blackdogonline.com



Various Artists *No New York*

(Antilles/Island, 1978)

The record that helped birth No Wave was conceived by Brian Eno, after he attended the May 1978 Artists' Space festival featuring numerous No Wave bands. Ten groups were originally slated to participate, but the final record offered only four: The Contortions, Teenage Jesus and the Jerks, Mars, and DNA. Eno's production slightly flattens the groups, but the radical dissonance of each still shines through—especially James Chance's hyper quintet, The Contortions, who peak with a spastic, unrehearsed version of James Brown's "I Can't Stand Myself."

Teenage Jesus and The Jerks

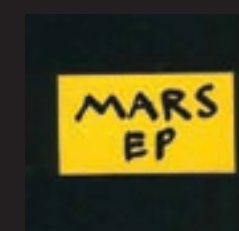
Teenage Jesus and The Jerks EP (Migraine, 1979)

Teenage Jesus and The Jerks were headed by Lydia Lunch, who wrote short, sharp songs centered on pounding beats, raging slide guitar, and desperate screams. This record, commonly known as the "Pink" EP due to the color of its sleeve and vinyl, collects two blistering seven-inches and two live tracks. The highlight is "Orphans," a nightmare tale of mauled children and bloody snow that captures Lunch's violent worldview with bludgeoning force.



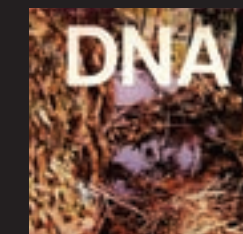
Mars *Mars EP* (Infidelity, 1979)

Formed in 1975, Mars was the first No Wave band. The quartet began by jamming on Velvets tunes, but quickly forged a chaotic mix of scraping guitars, oblong beats, and shrieking vocals from China Burg and Sumner Crane. Their outward-bound sound culminated on a five-song miasma known as the *Mars EP*, filled with stark dissonance and possessed yelps. Lester Bangs rightfully called it both "psychotic noise" and "their masterpiece."



DNA *A Taste of DNA EP* (American Clave, 1981)

DNA was Mars' brother band, led by Brazil-raised guitarist and singer Arto Lindsay. They started as a skewed avant-rock trio with Ikue Mori on drums and Robin Crutchfield on keyboards, but when bassist Tim Wright replaced Crutchfield, their sound got funkier and snakier, without losing its gnarled edge. *A Taste of DNA* is nearly perfect, especially "Blonde Red Head," a fractured slice of sloping art-pop that's both noisy and hummable.



Theoretical Girls "U.S. Millie"

b/w "You Got Me" 7-inch (Theoretical, 1978)

The *No New York* groups were all from the Lower East Side, but No Wave flourished in the artier SoHo, too, primarily in the form of Theoretical Girls. Their sole single displays the two sides of their schizophrenic art-rock personality: "U.S. Millie," penned by the classically trained Jeffrey Lohn, is a joyous mix of pumping keyboards and a goofy near-rap, while Glenn Branca's "You Got Me" is a bombastic slam that Branca reworked into his very first guitar symphony three years later.

Ground Zero

The Bush Tetras' drummer offers up his five favorite No Wave/post punk venues.



left: The Bush Tetras; above: Mars at CBGBs

//////////
 No discussion of No Wave, post-punk, or punk-funk is complete without at least a mention of The Bush Tetras. Like so many bands of their time, they flourished in New York's downtown scene, and despite putting out just a handful of EPs and singles, became legends in their own right, staging shows on the Lower East Side that blurred the line between rock concert and performance art. Drummer and founding member Dee Pop schools us on the five coolest venues from the era.

Ken Taylor

Tier 3

This was the first club to have The Bush Tetras (in February 1980). It was a serious hang for all of us and all our favorite groups developed there.

CBGB-OMFUG

What else can be said? And if the waitresses liked you, you could get a pitcher of Long Island iced teas for a buck. RIP Hilly Kristal.

The Mudd Club

After Tier 3, you went to The Mudd Club and learned how to become a vampire. It went late. Everyone wore sunglasses, and you needed them because when you left it was daylight.


Hurrah's

Uptown and slightly more posh. It had couches with pillows, which we would use for battles, like 8-Eyed Spy vs. the Tetras or Delta 5.

Max's Kansas City

Celebrity-spotting, advanced posturing, and general decadence. Great DJs, too.

The Bush Tetras' *Very Very Happy* is out now on ROIR. myspace.com/bushtetras



Encyclopedia ASTHMATICA

IN STORES
MARCH !!



IN STORES
FEBRUARY !!



Wave of Mutilation

Jack Sargeant sweeps the cutting room floor of No Wave's DIY film scene.



left: still from *Black Hearts Bleed Red*; above: still from *Fingered*

//////////

Author, curator, and lecturer Jack Sargeant's *Deathtripping: The Extreme Underground* (Soft Skull Press/Counterpoint; softcover, \$18.95) is more than just a look at the unexplored world of No Wave cinema. It's a definitive guide that's both survey and oral history, contextualizing the scene's frequently overlooked filmmakers into the grand scheme of sludgy, urbane 1970s and '80s NYC. Originally published overseas in 1995, *Deathtripping* ably examines each frame (with film stills and interviews with the likes of Richard Kern, Nick Zedd, Beth B, and others) and the filmmakers' artistic statements (most notably Zedd's manifesto "Cinema of Transgression") from the points of view of a cultural theorist and agit-pop-cultural omnivore. But unlike many other documents of the No Wave period, *Deathtripping* manages to bridge the gap between the genre's earliest inklings and its continued relevance through the '90s. Below, Sargeant weighs in on his favorite films from the era. *Ken Taylor*

Richard Kern *Fingered* (1986)

The first film in any list has to be *Fingered*. Kern's second collaboration with Lydia Lunch is not only one of the most disturbing portrayals of sex and violence committed to film, it is also one of the most entertaining, with Lunch and co-star Marty growling at each other like demented characters from some obscure hardboiled novella.

Beth and Scott B *Black Box* (1978)

Totally different in sensibility, but equally motivated by an interest in power relations, the No Wave/parapunk films of Beth and Scott B are a sustained analysis of contemporary control technologies, none more so than *Black Box*, which examines the sadism and power plays that transpire with contemporary interrogation techniques.

Tessa Hughes-Freeland and Tommy Turner *Rat Trap* (1986)

Rat Trap is one of the most incredibly visceral

portrayals of addiction committed to celluloid.

Jeri Cain Rossi *Black Hearts Bleed Red* (1992)

Fifteen minutes of film noir-inspired mayhem, with painter Joe Coleman playing an escaped psychopath.

Nick Zedd *War Is Menstrual Envy* (1992)

The editor of *The Underground Film Bulletin* and author of the "Cinema of Transgression" manifesto also directed an epic of experimental cinema in *War Is Menstrual Envy*, a crazed, visionary multiple-projection feature about underwater sex, the annihilation of humanity, and the end of oppression.

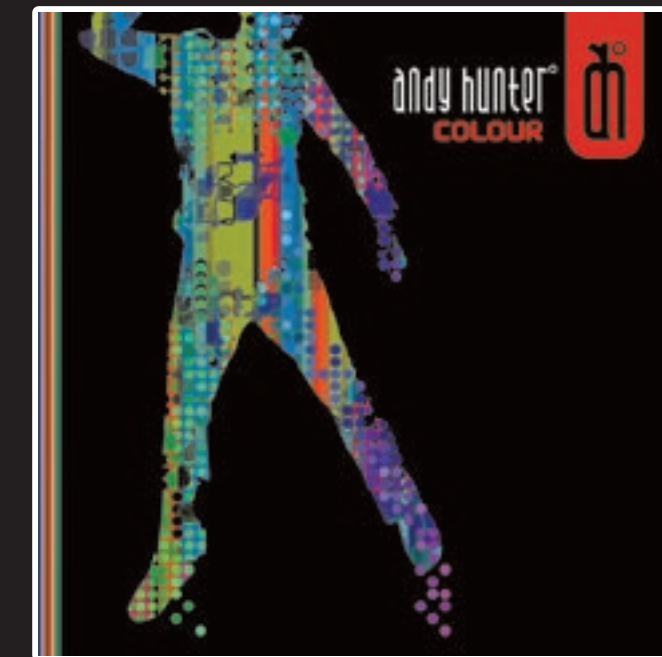
Deathtripping: The Extreme Underground is out now from Soft Skull Press/Counterpoint. softskull.com, jacktext.net



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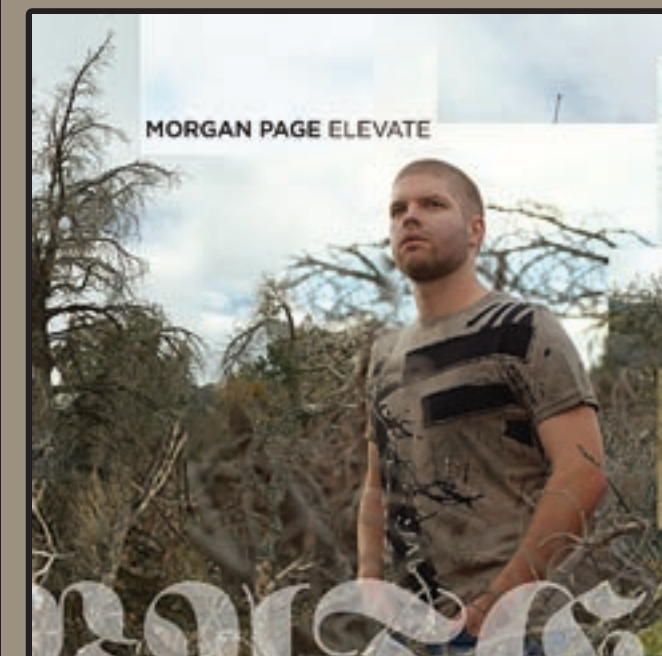


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MARX MAN

Photography:

Collette

Styling:

Michael Carbaugh

Casting and Production:

Tomas Delucia at

Maven Productions

Digital Assistant:

Jeremy Lips

Model:

Will Lewis at Red Models





(clockwise from top)
Indigo overdyed t shirt by
Shades by Leif and Tooya,
leather vest by Schott, wool
trousers by Polo by Ralph
Lauren, matte silver ring by
Bing Bang, beaded bracelets by
Francisco

Cotton oxford shirt by
Canterbury of New Zealand,
vintage tank top by Adidas,
necklace by Bing Bang, stylist's
own wool blanket and hat

Leather kidskin jacket by
Schott, brocade Western shirt
by Napajiri, t shirt with yellow
silk bib by Shades by Leif and
Tooya, jeans by True Religion,
brown knit beanie by Burton,
belt by Dries Van Noten



(above)
Jewelry by Bing Bang

(right)
Army jacket by Napajiri,
cable knit wool vest by
Martin Margiela, hand
knit beanie by Burton



ANTI-

BETTYE LAVETTE/BILLY BRAGG/BOB MOULD/CADENCE WEAPON
DEVOTCHKA/ERSI ARVIZU/GALACTIC/JOE HENRY/ISLANDS
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Photo by Rainer Schimick



Sascha Funke

Album Reviews 3.08



**THE BERLIN MINIMALIST
CRAFTS ANOTHER NEAR-
PERFECT TECHNO OPUS.**

SASCHA FUNKE
MANGO
Bpitch Control/GER/CD

Somewhere between dancefloor utility, lazy-time pop music, and an audiophile's workout lies the perfect techno album. Sascha Funke's *Mango*, the Berliner's first long-player in four years, is almost that album. Indeed, *Mango* reaffirms Funke as a current master of the minimal techno form but, more than that, it affirms that the genre still has much more going for it than just its benchmark *thup*. Granted, *Mango's* a bit more slippery—and moody and sexy and Euro—about the style's tropes than Supermayer's super-minimal-cum-electro-pop/rock effort *Save the World*, but the grooves here are at once ad-friendly and wonderfully deft diagrams of dance-music osmosis; elaborate sketches that showcase Funke's talent for bleeding pop into even the most by-the-books minimalism.

At times, *Mango* just feels like an incredibly somnolent rock record, something Morr Music might deliver in a particularly ballsy release cycle; in other spots, it's full of blinds-shut, bell-toned—oh, how he loves that sound—brooding ambience. Of course, there are plenty of Funke micro beats, perfectly placed, always developing in some way, like compass points leading from a wet winter street into the club that never sleeps yet never really pulls out of its dream state.

The sly and alluring "Feather" drapes itself on you in 40 seconds of warm, clean synth tone, approaching and receding in a sort of aural ellipse. A couple of gentle electric guitar notes introduce what sounds like a iron-cast, reverbed hand drum, itself receding and approaching, receding and approaching. Bits of metallic *musique concrète* and other warmer sounds offer themselves with similar push-pull tension and, about three minutes in, you're at the center of a solar system that Funke has set in motion around you, its gravity the tiniest bed of dwarfish kick drums.

Some tracks on *Mango* are less crafty about setting that disorienting mood, instead diverging into straight ambient. "Summer Rain," as the title implies, is a tad hokey and senti-

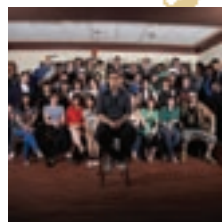
mental; all sampled rain falling on sampled piano and sampled harp, it barely saves itself in deep-space mega-delayed synths, so over-the-top and cheesed-out it feels like Funke is probably laughing to himself. The similarly beat-stripped closer is all descending, funereal tones with erstwhile Funke vocalist Fritz Kalkbrenner reciting, "The revolution won't be televised/Won't be live/Won't happen at all" over the top in a voice so drawn and monotone, you can hear him winking.

You also know he's winking because you've just been listening to what, in the end, is a monumental dance record, insofar as it's one that could lure you to sleep. It never bangs, but it never needs to. "Chemin des Figons," the album's "rock" song, moves itself along on a sampled snare and cymbal which drop out just barely long enough to catch you dancing to the umpteenth repetition of the same hypnotic guitar line (courtesy of M.I.A. guitarist Tim Tim).

Other songs here are far more straightforward. The title track—though it introduces a beat pattern bordering on tribal—stays strictly minimal, while "Lotre (Mehr Fleisch)" is propelled by the sharpest kick drum on the album. Never mind its signature ethereal bell tones, *Mango's* most obvious 12", "Double-Checked," captures almost everything about what makes this record stellar: It's a dense, just-fast-enough-to-be-house package of nearly colliding kicks, handclaps, and hi-hats crafted for listening, dancing, and sleepwalking. *Michael Byrne*



KLIMEK
DEDICATIONS
 Anticipate/US/CD
 On *Dedications*, abstract electronic vet Sebastian Meissner pays tribute to personal influences that include Steven Spielberg, Marvin Gaye, a Russian ship worker, and his grandmother. How they impacted his ambient pieces would make for good idle speculation, but his finest work shines here on its own terms. He has a sharp ear for echo, where one single pluck of a string or a piano chord typically rings and stays afloat in the air long after. His bright drones often resemble sunlight sweeping across a flooded forest floor. In his ode to Gaye and Ol' Dirty Bastard, he builds a massive orchestral drone that sinks the listener underwater. As for how those men influenced that moment, it's a question best left unanswered. *Cameron Macdonald*



AGF
WORDS ARE MISSING
 AGF Produktion/GER/CD
 The latest offering from Berlin-based "poem producer" Antye Greie (a.k.a. AGF) cuts out the half-sung lyrics that usually accompany her songs, letting her expert production speak for itself. Choppy samples, spare percussion, and slow, bare beats come together like minimal techno and downtempo on an experimental bender, forming rhythms from blocks of random noise, vocal snippets, and carefully mistimed sounds. Fittingly, the images in the beautiful accompanying booklet focus on fragments of text painted on paper, asphalt, and Greie's skin and hair. Failed communication is the theme, and the only meaningful word spoken on the album is "oops." But rather than rehash error-happy glitch hop, *Words* delivers fresh music that is, dare we say, very poetic. *Eric Smillie*

APHRODESIA
LAGOS BY BUS
 Cyberset/US/CD
 Like musical cousins Antibalas and NOMO, the Bay Area Afrobeat enthusiasts of Aphrodesia take their Afro straight-up, no relaxer: The group recently toured Africa, sucking up influences, and even playing Fela Kuti's daughter's club in Nigeria. *Lagos by Bus* shows off this knowledge, resetting highlife and Afrobeat sounds alongside American free-jazz influences and other African instrumentation, such as *mbira* playing reminiscent of Thomas Mapfumo's Blacks Unlimited. Yet something musically timid remains, as though Aphrodesia is still slightly in awe of its influences, and for now it seems that this remarkably talented band's best efforts remain on stage rather than in the studio. *Justin Hopper*

BEACH HOUSE
DEVOTION
 Carpark/US/CD
 The delicate, languid, minimalist pop of Baltimore duo Beach House's *Devotion* is a glimmering dream. These love songs creep forward in bossa nova rhythms and even meters like they're chasing after a slowly receding tide. Victoria Legrand sings in a cave-echoed voice that's a bridge between a sort of one-room-over ethereality and pungent melody; her voice glides over the mix (drums, piano, and organ mostly) like a low-hanging cloud, her words stretched into near incomprehensibility. Her high, breathy peaks on "Turtle" are charmingly imperfect, while "Gila"'s slide guitar dances with her voice like a desperate lover, hopelessly devoted. *Michael Byrne*

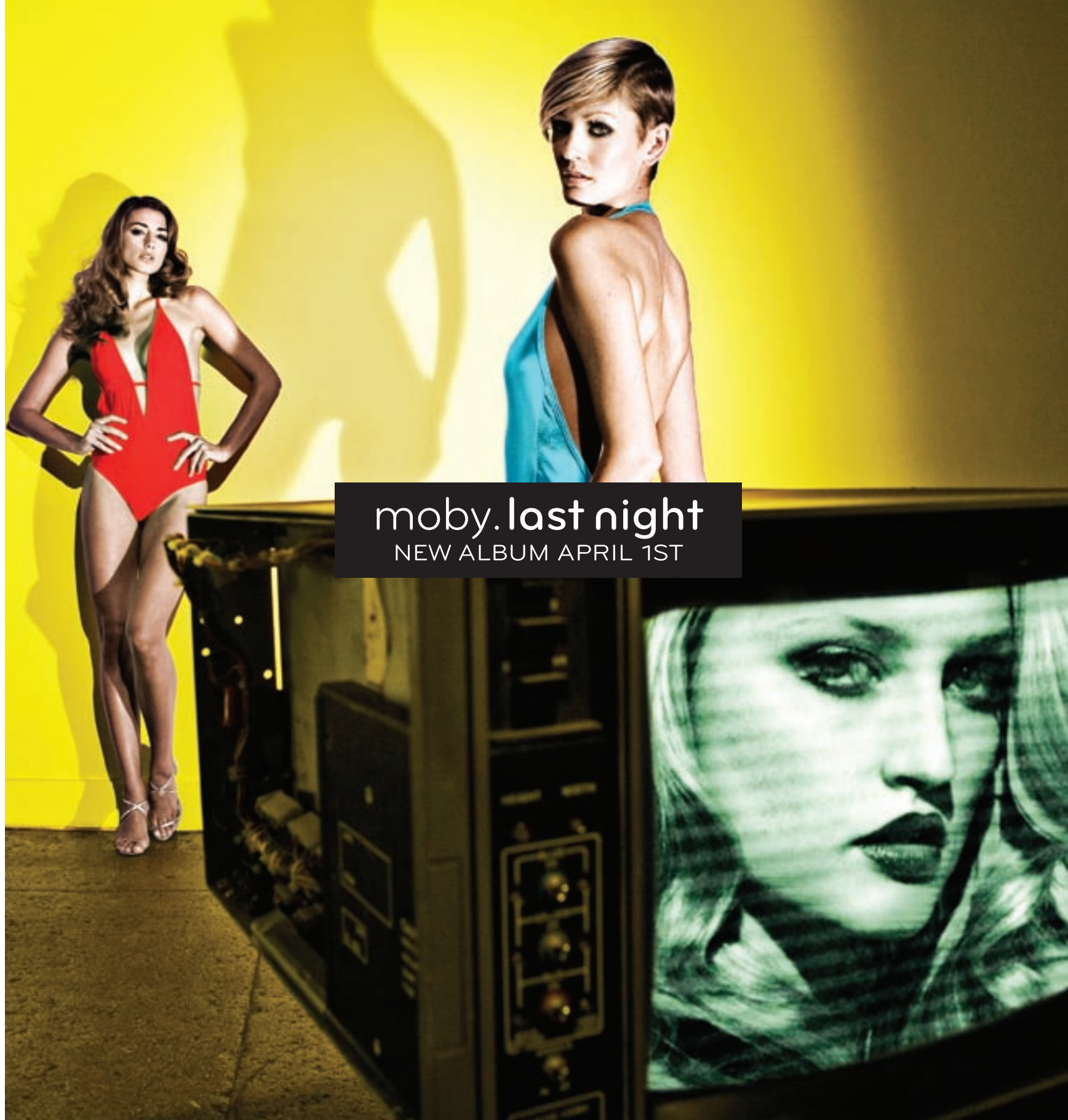
BORN RUFFIANS
RED YELLOW BLUE
 Warp/UK/CD
 After the brief taste of 2006's *Hummingbird* EP, the anticipation has been brewing for *Red Yellow Blue*, the debut from Toronto's Born Ruffians. Mostly comprised of guitar, bass, and drums, the trio takes simple guitar pop and makes it awesome again. Aided by Animal Collective/Panda Bear producer Rusty Santos, the perky rock 'n' roll is as warm-sounding as it is irresistible. The title track offers some gentle guitars before "Barnacle Goose" knocks out crazy-catchy gang vocals and "In a Mirror" builds to an uplifting finale. Somehow this sounds like The Strokes, Grizzly Bear, and Rites of Spring all at once, and it's completely addictive. *Josiah Hughes*

BRUNO PRONSATO
WHY CAN'T WE BE LIKE US
 Hello?Repeat/GER/CD
 Over the last few years, Berlin-based producer Bruno Pronato has issued several leftfield-techno 12s on discerning labels (Telegraph, Perlon, et al) while maintaining rigorous quality control. With this second full-length, Pronato reaffirms that his music is worth the serious headphone scrutiny one devotes to a Pierre Henry or Eric Dolphy LP. *Why Can't We Be Like Us* will also please the world's more adventurous selectors, but its nine tracks are far from facile DJ tools. Pronato labored prodigiously over the compositional elements and tones while constructing rhythms that are as labyrinthine as they are danceable. The acute attention to detail and psychedelic properties of the disc's production elevate it to the rarefied heights of Villalobos' best work. *Dave Segal*

CADENCE WEAPON
AFTERPARTY BABIES
 Anti-/US/CD
 When most indie MCs coming off a sleeper-hit debut would keep true to their form, 21-year-old Edmonton, Alberta rapper Cadence Weapon (a.k.a. Rolllie Pemberton) can't help but fuck with the format. On his second disc, his Anti- debut, Pemberton throws his spiffire verses atop self-made disco and electro-house beats with aplomb. Tracks like "In Search of the Youth Crew" (an easy pick for first single) bob and weave with slick bleeps and hypertext-literate verses delivered in the most proper of over-enunciated Canadian accents. It may be a little jarring for second or two, but once it settles in, you'll soon to fall victim to his not-so-hidden weapon—that undeniable flow. *Derek Grey*

CHEB I SABBABH
DEVOTION
 Six Degrees/US/CD
 DJ/producer Cheb i Sabbah is the most recognizable force in America's contribution to Eastern-inspired electronica: recognizable enough to become a victim of his own success. Sabbah's trademark sound of Indian and North African classical music restaged within atmospheric dance music has become a cliché. But for *Devotion*, Cheb i Sabbah heads his critics off at the pass by returning to South Asia, site of his most successful inspirations. His resultant collaborators—devotional singers such as Rana Singh and Anup Jalota—keep *Devotion* more "global" than "beats," and in doing so, make it more palatable to both listeners and dancers, who recognize that South Asian rhythms need little enhancement to make the floor shake. *Justin Hopper*

CYMANDE
PROMISED HEIGHTS
 Newhouse/US/CD
 Early '70s U.K.-by-way-of-West Indies outfit Cymande mixed jazz, soul, calypso, reggae, and funk like no one before them; it's no exaggeration to say they were years, if not decades, ahead of their time. Long revered among loop diggas, they've been sampled by The Fugees, De La Soul, Masta Ace, and MC Solaar, among others. *Promised Heights* is an updated version of Cymande's third album—recorded in 1973, but only now released in the U.S.—featuring three bonus tracks and two remixes (including "Brothers on the Slide"). Even without the revisions, the songs sound less dated than one might think, with unique arrangements that differentiate Cymande from most of their funk contemporaries. If this isn't rare groove/breakbeat heaven, nothing is. *Eric K. Arnold*



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DADDY RINGS
THE MOST HIGH

African Glory-Rockers Town/GER/CD

"I got to move forward/And put the culture in the place where it once was," Rasta toaster Daddy Rings proclaims on "Dispensation." That's enough *raison d'être* for any album. Though Rings has been under the American radar since the mid-'90s, when he challenged Shabba and Cutty for top-ranking status in JA, he's kept busy, producing for his African Glory label and frequently collaborating with Gentleman (who appears on "The Future"). Rings' delivery has matured considerably; he still bubbles hot, yet he's become a wiser, more meditative, and inspirational artist. Roots and culture lovers will find much to rejoice over on *The Most High*, which aims for—and achieves—classic heights.

Eric K. Arnold



DEL THA FUNKEE HOMOSAPIEN
11TH HOUR

Definitive Jux/US/CD

As anticipated as the new season of *Last*, Del's fourth full-length comes from alt-rap powerhouse Def Jux, yet *11th Hour* features none of the label's usual suspects, and apart from one track by Opio, Del's Hiero brethren are conspicuously absent as well. So it's pretty much Del's baby—luckily, everyone's favorite funky Homo sapien has been boning up on music theory these past eight years, resulting in a tighter, more focused sound. As a lyricist, Del's potential has always been scary; now that he's firmed up his production chops, it's downright devastating—fewer quizzical non-sequiturs, more "Naked Fonk." Already a legend, on *11th Hour*, Del takes a bold step toward complete mastery of the hip-hop art form.

Eric K. Arnold



DISKJOKKE
STAYING IN

Smalltown Supersound/NOR/CD

If it seems odd that an artist so closely associated with the renowned club night Sunkissed called his debut album "Staying In," remember that Joachim Dyr Dahl is from Norway, where winter gets cold enough to encourage lots of cozy fireside nights. Here Dyr Dahl creates instrumentals with spacey textures, layered with elastic basslines and house and disco beats, all at least nodding in the direction of pop. The album's gentle quirks can sometimes feel unsubstantial, but only occasionally, and Dyr Dahl makes enough interesting choices to keep the album moving (like the percussive, stripped groove of "Cold Out"). Not exactly a harbinger of mass club closings, though there's plenty here for the occasional quiet night at home.

Luciana Lopez

DJ NANA
THE WORLD INSIDE MY HEAD VOL. 2

Urbnet/CAN/download

It may sound like nonsense, but DJ NaNa's handle is a popular nickname in his parent's homeland of Ghana, and the world inside his Canadian head is an excitingly confusing mess of American freestyle and scratch culture, '90s European sample culture, and modern digital post-border sonic vagabondism. NaNa's diverse influences come together on "Wheel Life Is," blending together Kanye-style chipmunk soul samples, string rhythms, and scratches, and a molasses-slow break out of the chopped-and-screwed playbook. *The World Inside My Head, Vol. 2* balances mostly instrumental tracks with selected guest MCs, peaking on "Untitled," a Jay Dee-ish showcase for fierce verses from Turbin and Planet Asia.

Rob Geary

DUB TRIO
ANOTHER SOUND IS DYING

Ipecac/US/CD

With each new release, Dub Trio squelches dub closer to the vanishing point. Their 2004 live debut showcased the band's ability to meld dub elements into hardcore punk and nu-metal; last year's studio disc, *New Heavy*, saw them charging away from King Tubby, reaching obliquely for Bad Brains' and Killing Joke's power chords. Although *Another Sound Is Dying* continues to head largely in the same direction, the trio's ability to chop and paste various musical forms see a resultant hybrid ultimately transcending category. Indeed, they manage to reference Black Flag and the Butthole Surfers whilst injecting the proceedings with healthy doses of moody bass and the occasional echoing skank interlude, making the album equally challenging and tantalizing.

David Katz

FLORIANA VS. MÀCRO
HELEYLAH SUNSET

Dalaki/GER/CD

Joerg Schuster's 2007-launched Dalaki label looks to elevate deep electronic and electro-acoustic sounds with visual elements, beyond MP3 files and humdrum jewel cases. For its first release, *Heleylah Sunset*, Floriana (Schuster) and Mâcro (credited only as a "very nice guy from Madrid") team up for a downtempo offering that comes with stickers, stencils, and elegant extraneous packaging. Luckily the tunes measure up to its design elements. Like most respectable ambient work, the record processes several genres almost seamlessly into one gentle hum. Most notably, Schuster uses softened deep techno and glitchy electro alongside dub to create organic, pleasant soundscapes. With track titles like "Stream," "Sunset," and "Easy," what you see is what you get.

Joe Cally

INFAMOUS MOBB
REALITY RAP

Sure Shot/US/CD

From Marley Marl to Nas, the notorious Queensbridge projects have sired many legends. On their third release, Infamous Mobb also shows their QB pedigree. If you like your rap gritty, you'll appreciate Nitty, Gambino, and G.O.D.'s tales of growing up in America's largest housing projects. Despite the aptly titled "That Smell" ("that smell" is Chimpunk'd Skynryd) the trio is backed by impressive producers both new (Steve Sola) and established (Alchemist). Erick Sermon laces the ominous "Betti Bye Bye," while longtime affiliates Mobb Deep also show up on the Havoc-produced "Blauul" and the Prodigy-assisted "Handle Ya Business." But the group shines best on "Music 4 the User," when they reveal the sensitivity beneath the harsh exterior of their reality raps.

James Mayo

MIKE LADD
NOSTALGIALATOR

Definitive Jux/US/CD

This Boston-bred, Parisian-based rapper has an intellectual streak that can only be matched by DJ Spooky, but his buckshot approach is more like Public Enemy—where scathing critiques take out all suckers and provide the proverbial time-check. While *Nostalgialator* made its European debut in 2004, its U.S. release proves it's got staying power. "Trouble Shot" offers a hook that's as catchy as Diddy's "Bad Boy for Life," but without succumbing to ego and narcissism. And "Housewife at Play" reveals that the MC can still have fun, rocking out like Hendrix and the Beasties.

Daniel Siewek



Mahjongg

MAHJONGG
KONTPAB

K/US/CD

A slightly odd fit for indie mainstay K Records, Chicago's Mahjongg looks to blaze new territory on their second record, *Kontpab*, by combining motorik rhythms with a tribal-influenced (think '80s Talking Heads) indie aesthetic. It's an ambitious formula, and when these disparate elements coalesce, like on album standout "Wipe Out," the band achieves an effective, trance-like insistence. The recipe doesn't always work, though. Often, the excessively choppy sonic components are just too broken up to ever unite. That might be Mahjongg's intention—to maintain a herky-jerky quality—but it makes the record's melodic moments, while engaging and rewarding, too infrequent. A few minutes into *Kontpab*'s final track, "Rise Rice," the band pulls off an excellent tribal breakdown, but it comes too late. Definite points for creativity here, at the very least.

Joe Cally

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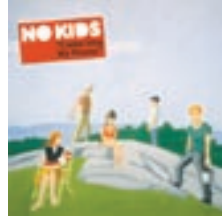


MILLE CARO AND FRANCK GARCIA

PAIN DISAPPEARS

Buzzin' Fly/UK/CD

Here, veteran Parisian DJ Caroline Laher teams up with producer Franck Garcia to deliver Buzzin' Fly's first artist full-length. Laher and Garcia try out a few styles on this album; the tracks that meander into indie-electronic rock territory are neither bad nor particularly memorable (this style is done much better on labels like Morr). *Pain Disappears*'s tightest pieces are those that reveal Laher's DJ sensibilities: "No Name" opens with noisy, pinprick-like feedback, which gives way to hip-swinging snares and minimal funk, while "Lost" melds simple ascending synth rhythms with tribal percussion to create lovely tech-house. Watch for invigorating stuff to come from this dynamic production duo. *Janet Tzou*



NO KIDS

COME INTO MY HOUSE

Tomlab/GER/CD

Previously the quartet known as P:ano, Vancouver's No Kids return refreshed on *Come Into My House*. With shiny production and inspired collaborations with local scene-makers, the record marries Nick Krgovich's near-perfect songwriting with romanticized elements of electro-pop, vocal R&B, and modern soul. Opener "Great Escape" is a soft, symphonic offering that is awoken by the rhythmic piano on follower "For Halloween." Elsewhere, "The Beaches All Closed" could be R. Kelly covering Hot Chip, while "Four Freshman Locked Out as the Sun Goes Down" is all four-part harmonies and a simple guitar. Marked by innovation, *Come Into My House* is a remarkable achievement. *Josiah Hughes*



ROBERT OWENS

NIGHT-TIME STORIES

Compost/GER/CD

It's time again for Robert Owens, the buttery voice on epic classics "I'll Be Your Friend" and Fingers Inc.'s "Can You Feel It." Now Owens, who defined the soul of vocal house, blesses us with a collection of tunes built in collaboration with producers as varied as Kirk Degiorgio and Jimpster. His graceful, transcendent voice and an insistent house pulse weaves these tracks together, even as the productions sashay from the trappings of Germanic techno ("Merging") to the futuristic R&B of "Now I Know." Those in the know will remember Owens' DJ and production chops are nearly the equal of his legendary voice, and his self-produced piano mover "Press On" will remind any who forgot. *Rob Geary*

PANTHER

14 KT GOD

Kill Rock Stars/US/CD

Maybe Charlie Salas-Humara didn't know people were already taking him plenty seriously as a huffed-gas busted-soul spazzoid when he retooled his joke-cum-primary project Panther this past year. Gone are the broken falsetto yawls, drunk beats, and general devil-may-care dance music for the clinically insane (or the people who have no idea what dance music is supposed to be). Gone is that gleeful sense of wreckage but in its place is something far more fully formed. Notably, this release, Panther's third, includes live drumming courtesy of 31 Knots' Joe Kelly, impressive cello workouts, and Salas-Humara's heavily reverbed singing voice, a surprisingly smooth thing when it's not being punished. *Michael Byrne*

GHISLAIN POIRIER

NO GROUND UNDER

Ninja Tune/UK/CD

On *No Ground Under*, inimitable DJ/producer Ghislain Poirier enlists a vast crew of international pals—from France, Jamaica, and Brooklyn—to pepper his inventive beats with worldly touches of Trinidadian soca and dancehall. The Montreal-based DJ's choppy, futuristic hip-hop numbers can easily stand on their own, and in some cases, the guests overcrowd the tracks. But cuts like "No More Blood," which features dancehall crooner Face-T, and the gritty "City Walking," where freestyle MC Abdominal visits, are expert collaborations. Some of the best tracks, though, find Poirier going it alone, like "Hit & Red," with a broken, reconstructed beat that recalls *Rounds*-era Four Tet, and the ultramodern, Neptunes-y "It's a War War War." *Joe Colly*

CONNIE PRICE AND THE KEYSTONES

TELL ME SOMETHING

Ubiquity/US/CD

With its sophomore effort, L.A.'s Connie Price and the Keystones have become the latest funk/soul act to enlist MCs to compliment its sound. And on almost all accounts, the cast of top-notch, mostly West Coast guests thrives, rhyming atop the rich, cinematic productions of CPK's Dan Ubick and Co. No doubt, these beats can be enjoyed vocal-free on the accompanying instrumental version of this album, but it's hard to pass up Project Blowed's Mykah 9 unleashing his melodious flow on the uptempo soul track "Highlife," or Blood of Abraham getting globally conscious on the chill dub track "Pirates." *Tell Me Something* is the rare live hip-hop project where neither the MCs nor the band gets outshone. *Max Herman*

PROSUMER/MURAT TEPELI

SERENITY

Ostgut Ton/GER/CD

Panoramabar resident DJ Prosumer (Achim Brandenburg) is a diehard Chicago-house/Detroit-techno disciple who, along with fellow German producer Murat Tepeli, tinkers with the genres' templates just enough to avoid homage. *Serenity* actually suffers from an excess of personality (drama-queen vocals—some by Elif Biçer—with soap-opera scenarios), and most of *Serenity*'s 17 tracks come off as pastel, Herbert-lite exercises. Tepeli and Prosumer generate some interesting tones, but the beats often sound too muffled and restrained, and the melodies are sometimes cloying. *Serenity* works best when Prosumer and Tepeli ditch the vocals and let the music do the emoting, approaching the subtle melodic grandeur and tonal depth of Carl Craig and Theo Parrish. *Dave Segal*

RINGS

BLACK HABIT

Paw Tracks/US/CD

Previously known as First Nation, this trio changed its name to Rings when Abby Portner (sister of Animal Collective's David Portner) replaced a member. *Black Habit*, their debut for AC's Paw Tracks imprint, is rife with tribal drums and circular jams. Co-produced with Múm's Kria Brekken, the record feels slightly uneven. On one hand, the tone of the guitar and piano on tracks like "All Right Peace" and "Double Thanks" is warm and beneficent. But on the other, the vocals are too loud, and can get pretty grating at times, as on "Scape Aside." Regardless, *Black Habit* has more good ideas than bad ones, resulting in a decent first effort. *Josiah Hughes*



NEON NEON
STAINLESS STYLE

Lex/UK/CD

Super Furry Animals aren't popular for digital funk, but they used to drop techno from their own soundsystem before they blew up Marshall stacks. And so the sequenced beats and bleats of Neon Neon, a side project of Furry honcho Gruff Rhys and L.A. producer Boom Bip, stream together seamlessly. Neon's synthetic thump is a throwback to the studio dance of The Cars and OMD as much as it is new-jack revisionism, taking advantage of postmodern pals like Har Mar Superstar and Spank Rock, who show up to throw down dirty rhymes on "Trick or Treat." Gruff's plaintive vocals are perfect for horny odes like "Raquel"—a siren song for Raquel Welch—or the Princess Leia tribute "Told Her on Alderaan." And it is fitting that the whole effort is a concept album loosely based on coke-snorting car entrepreneur John DeLorean: Neon Neon has gone back to the future. *Scott Thill*



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SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE
SEA FROM SHORE
Thrill Jockey/US/CD

Field Music's David Brewis hasn't decided to go it alone: School of Language is just his laptop side project, which in a way is a testament to tech. This solo effort built of bytes rocks nicely, buttressed by smoking guitar anthems like "Poor Boy" and "Disappointment '99." Angular funk makes "This Is No Fun" a spirited jam, while the four-part concept-pop of "Rockist" is a sonic Tower of Babel built with the help of Garageband, semiotics, and soul music. Brewis doesn't seem to have wasted a moment in the studio during this sojourn. If the other two members of Field Music churn out solo projects this energetic, Thrill Jockey will have a four-headed hydra on its hands. *Scott Thill*



SCUBA
A MUTUAL ANTIPTHY
Hotflush/UK/CD

It'll be more difficult to define dubstep if Paul Rose keeps releasing records like this, creating a very healthy situation for a genre that's already victim to numerous copycat crimes. As Scuba, Rose is one of the genre's lead beatsmiths, but he breaks free even further from dubstep's stereotypes on *Antipathy*. Like the best dub rhythms, there is a sublime patience amid his clangor; throughout the album, Rose places a loose breathing space between each smacked-down beat, and his gray-skied synth chords recall the digital tundra of *Amber-era* Autechre. Unfortunately, some tracks are too short on ideas and resemble sketches that await unauthorized remixes from bedroom studio producers. Still, *Antipathy* points dubstep in a fertile direction. *Cameron Macdonald*



Steve Reid

STEVE REID ENSEMBLE
DAXAAR

Domino/US/CD

Master drummer Steve Reid recorded his latest foray into experimental modern jazz in Senegal's capital city, whose life-teeming rhythms ultimately resulted in an extremely inspired effort. *Daxaar* throbs to an ancient pulse, enhanced by today's technology. Though mainly consisting of several extended jam sessions, the album rarely meanders; it's perhaps most suggestive of a more worldly, less obtuse version of Miles Davis' *On the Corner*. With constantly shifting moods and tempos, Reid and company imbue their Afro-futurist opus with feeling, drive, and purpose. The instruments speak in familiar, yet esoteric, tongues; the level of communication between musicians approaches telepathic. Not only is *Daxaar* one of the most intuitive and organic-sounding electronic music albums in eons, it pretty much dispels the notion that there's no innovation left in jazz. This is an album you could listen to every day for the next 20 years and never get bored of. *Eric K. Arnold*

DON SHTONE
BEWARE OF THE CAT
Off/US/CD

German artist Sven Dohse has recorded a full-length under his Don Shtone moniker before, but it's on this sophomore full-length that the project comes untethered—in the best of ways. Assembling spare techno beats with snippets of retro jazz, Dohse has made a funny little album, idiosyncratic and whimsical but not twee. He's willing to follow an idea wherever it goes, in some cases more successfully ("Am I Blue") than others ("Miracles"). The album sometimes tries for a grandiosity it never achieves, but the pops and crackles fizzing beneath meandering jazz samples give it energy nonetheless. When Sonny Rollins gets the urge for techno, he might reach for something like this. *Luciana Lopez*

SIAN ALICE GROUP
59.59

The Social Registry/US/CD

Like the cracked dream sonics of David Lynch and the Velvet Underground, Sian Alice Group's first effort has a way with dark hooks and disembodied melodies—they sneak their way into you quite nicely. "Kirilov" and "Contours" tickle your urge for hypnotic structures while "Way Down to Heaven" drives home your need for a distorted jam. Even the minimalist orchestral interludes that sprinkle the Group's debut satisfy classical cravings. But the devotion to lo-fi tech could use some punch: A few heavy drums would come in handy on "Way Down to Heaven," just to spice up the proceedings. That said, Sian Alice Group has serious skills. Just don't call them "shoegaze." They seem to really hate that. *Scott Thill*

SUBTLE
YELL & ICE
Lex/UK/CD

A collaborative reinterpretation of their last disc *For Hero: For Fool*, Subtle's repurposed *Yell & Ice* is new to you. Which is to say that its origins have been recombined, remixed, and revised within an inch of their cerebral yet funky lives, with the help of Hood's Chris Adams, TV on the Radio's Tunde Adebimpe, and more. The result is another set of banging jams built from either side of the tech spectrum, whether you're talking the digital thump of "Falling" and "Middleclass Haunt" or the spaced beatboxing of "Sinking Pinks." Subtle's sonic atmospheres emerge from their computers almost fully formed, even when they're manhandled by their friends' talented paws. A must-have for the visualizer generation. *Scott Thill*

SUNNY LEVINE
LOVE RHINO
Quango/US/CD

The "love" part of this album's title is obvious, but the "rhino" might need some explanation. Singer-songwriter Sunny Levine wrote these songs after a failed relationship, hence the rhino metaphor: He's a tough-skinned creature who keeps on keepin' on. Though Levine has produced for a range of artists (Pete Dinklage, Hugh Masekela) and comes from a musical family (Quincy Jones is his grandfather), this disc, his debut full-length, lacks depth, with stunningly dull lyrics straight from your seventh-grade journal. His idiosyncratic rock, mixing organic and electronic elements, isn't strong enough to make up for his lack of perspective or his pedestrian writing. As a producer, he's an old hand, but as a musician, he just sounds immature. *Luciana Lopez*

URSULA 1000
UNDRESSED... REMIXED
ESL/US/CD

Naturally, ESL has favored the sounds of its label heads, the Thievery Corporation boys, and their chic, cosmopolitan lounge leanings—a sound that Ursula 1000 (a.k.a. N.Y.-based Alex Gimeno) has embraced, though with a more playful edge. Here, his songs from the *Here Comes Tomorrow* album are tackled by others; also on offer is a new dancehall-flavored track, "Step Back," remixed into a bassy version by Deekline and Ed Solo. The remixes blend a jet-set mentality, a cheeky sense of humor, and pure sexiness, like the Prince-style funk lacing Fort Knox Five's remix of "Elektrik Boogie" or the sleek minimal techno of Robosonic's "Hello! Let's Go to a Disco" remix. Sassily sophisticated. *Luciana Lopez*



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Things to think
about in 2008...

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The Presets
Muscles, Bumblebee
Avalanches, Wolfmother
New Young Pony Club
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Lou Donaldson

Photo by Francis Wolff



A COLLECTION FROM THE LEGENDARY JAZZ VAULT UNRAVELS THE DIGGER-FRIENDLY DNA OF '90S HIP-HOP.

DROPPIN' SCIENCE: GREATEST SAMPLES FROM THE BLUE NOTE LAB
Blue Note/US/CD

Even today, listening to jazz saxophonist Lou Donaldson's 1969 take on Johnnie Taylor's chitlin-circuit banger "Who's Makin' Love (To Your Old Lady)," it's a stretch to locate the primordial DNA of '90s hip-hop in the mix. But just as Donaldson swiped a funky backbeat and a Blue loop guitar lick from soul music, once you slow things down and pump up the bass, there's Marley Marl and "Droppin' Science" stealing it right back. On *Droppin' Science: Greatest Samples From the Blue Note Lab*, the venerable jazz label not only touts its place in 1990s hip-hop history, but reexamines the jazz-funk that couldn't save the label from its first demise (in 1979), yet which proved one of its most important legacies.

From 1988 and "Droppin' Science" through to Dr. Dre's 1999 track "The Next Episode," Capitol/Blue Note's '70s back catalog laid down the blueprint for hip-hop's expansion—into textural and textual subtlety—just as James Brown and Chic had done for hip-hop's foundation. Samples of Donaldson's "Who's Makin' Love" as well as "It's Your Thing" (the basis for Brand Nubian's "Punks Jump Up to Get Beat Down"), Donald Byrd's "Think Twice," and Lonnie Smith's "Spinnin' Wheel" (both used extensively by De La Soul and A Tribe Called Quest), and a multitude of others made Blue Note a crate digger's *cri de coeur* during the glory days of hip-hop sampling.

No one knows this better than Eli Wolf, Blue Note Records V.P. of A&R. A 30-something jazz saxophonist and hip-hopophile, Wolf has had a hand in much of Blue Note's extensive history of embracing its own sample- and remix-ability, from dabbling on the *New Groove* projects to co-producing Madlib's *Shades of Blue* to compiling *Droppin' Science*. "It was a change [in hip-hop]," says Wolf of what he calls hip-hop's Blue Note era, "but really it was more of an evolution. As a hip-hop fan and a jazz fan at that time in the late '80s and early '90s, I really saw the two coalesce—with the Native

Tongues era, for example, there was a transition, going from straight soul and funk to more jazzy sounds."

To illustrate that era, Wolf has assembled a collection of recordings judged on two qualifications: the cultural impact of the music each is sampled in, and how the song stands on its own. Blue Note's breaks contributions and seminal acid-jazz sounds have been touted on compilations for years, for example on the *Blue Break Beats* series, but *Droppin' Science* succeeds in two ways in which others have often failed. As a look back at the broad creativity and production genius of 1990s hip-hop, *Science* shows us producers who were willing and able to ignore old hip-hop standards in order to find sounds more aligned to their increasing musicality and studio maturity.

Perhaps more importantly, however, *Science* provides a new look at Blue Note's own 1970s output. In his 2003 book, *Blue Note Records: The Biography*, the late, great jazz curmudgeon Richard Cook devotes mere pages to the label's entire '70s existence. "The label floundered around in search of a direction," he says, dismissing the likes of Donald Byrd's Mizell Brothers-produced '70s albums as "increasingly silly." Maybe so, to an avant-gardist like Cook. To the rest of the world, those productions provided the dramatic and orchestral jazz-funk sounds that defined the time when hip-hop became the most commercially and artistically important music in the world, giving voice to everything from Dre's Gs-and-drama swathes of sound to J Dilla's reinvention of the hip-hop producer. *Justin Hopper*

REVIEWS COMPILATIONS

BIPPP: FRENCH SYNTH WAVE 1979/85

Everloving/US/CD

Maybe, just maybe, the Francophilia surrounding Daft Punk and Justice will draw more kids to the ghosts of French rock's past. Here's a good gateway drug: *Bipp* documents a dozen bands that absorbed the wiles of Devo, Human League, and The Buzzcocks. The key elements are rhythms that wear pants a few sizes too small and snarky vocals that ta-WEAK up VOW-els. Act's grooves take The Stooges' frenetic energy to a ping-pong match and TGV's Casio synth-pop is a soundtrack for middle-school science fairs. And then you have Mary Moor robotically telling the world "it's a pretty day to die," and Casino Music's catty, spy-flick funk. Genuine Gallic weirdness. *Cameron Macdonald*

DESSOUS' BEST KEPT SECRETS

Dessous/GER/2CD

House label Dessous bills itself as sexed-out, tousle-haired, and bedroom-eyed, and this double-disc compilation just furthers that aesthetic. The first disc is compiled by the ubiquitous Steve Bug, and the second (better) disc is mixed by the now Berlin-based Vincenzo. The cuts here—from better-known names like Phonique, as well as newcomers like Ryo Murakami—go deep, with grooves that build slowly. The label's strong identity means listeners know what to expect—both a blessing and a curse, as the consistent quality is counterbalanced by the lack of surprise. *Luciana Lopez*

DISCO NOT DISCO: POST PUNK, ELECTRO & LEFTFIELD DISCO CLASSICS 1974-1986

Strut/UK/CD

Strut's *Disco Not Disco* compilations posit that the genre is anything but one-dimensional. The 14 tracks here range widely and rewardingly over the styles referenced in its title. The lineup favors U.S. and U.K. artists, but Japan (YMO), Belgium (Kazino), and Germany (Liaisons Dangereuses, whose tough, clipped electro was huge in Detroit clubs) are represented, too. Brits like Delta 5 and Vivien Goldman rely on elastic, buoyant basslines to move crowds and imprint their skewed, Caucasoïd funk indelibly in your memory, while Konk, Material, and James White & The Blacks (August Darnell's sleek disco remix of "Contort Yourself") add multi-culti NYC flavor. Interestingly, the madly intricate jazz fusion of Isotope's "Crunch Cake" is the best—and least "disco"—cut here. *Dave Segal*

JOKERS OF THE SCENE: TOP SHELF MOTHER FUCKER MIX

Mad Decent/US/CD

Jokers of the Scene have become the darlings of the Mad Decent label, and with good reason: Their catchy remixes and original tracks call to mind the loopy in-your-face-ness of Switch, and their sampling choices are familiar enough to elicit cheers on the dancefloor while still sounding fresh. The mix is about one-third original material or remixes, and the rest offers J.O.T.S.-approved tunes from Radioclit, Acid Jacks, Crookers, and Bart B More. The XXXChange/Devlin/Darko remix of DJ Class and two mixes of J.O.T.S.'s "Juggle It" are highlights. The whole thing is filled with buzzing synths and post-disco/electro beats, and while sometimes the mix plays it a bit safe, it's good fun overall. *Matt Earp*

STRICTLY THE BEST 38

VP/US/CD

Genuine new talent and authentic music distinguishes annual reggae hits compilation *STB 38* from the series' previous 37 volumes. 2007 was immersed in classic reggae songwriting, evidenced here by Tarrus Riley's rock-solid ballad "She's Royal," a universally embraced track that occupied international charts for months. A post-prison Jah Cure breathes a sigh of relief over the Guardian Angel riddim-driven "To Your Arms of Love," while songstress Tami Chynn—dancehall's Gwen Stefani—rides the same melody on her playful "Over and Over Again." Morgan Heritage, Beres Hammond, and Queen Ifrica offer their chart-worthy roots and lovers fare, but newcomers Etana ("Roots"), Duane Stephenson ("Cottage"), and Alaine ("Sincerely") prove their stars are also on the rise. *Tomas Palermo*

THE BEATARDS: ENDLESS DRUMMER MIXTAPE

MTR!/US/CD

The Beatards, hosts of NYC's innovative Mixtape Riot! night, bring their penchant for bouncing, club-ready hip-hop to record with this 25-track mix. While this trio's remixes of songs by R. Kelly and Robin Thicke put a quirky spin on recognizable radio hits, much of the original material from The Beatards is just as notable. Hand-clapping dancefloor rap ("Gimmie That") and even laid-back, introspective joints ("Rain Is Gone") comprise UTK, Chuck Wild, and DJO's respective range here. Meanwhile the inclusion of new tracks from Santogold, Kid Acne, and other innovators help keep this mixtape moving along nicely. *Max Herman*

WE ARE PUNKS 2

Datapunk/GER/2CD

Something about this title really irks me: What is "punk" about Anthony Rother's label mix? Is it the constipated blasts of distorted synth grinds that interrupt the groove? The neutered calls-to-arms like "This is iconic warfare"? Considering punk's long-co-opted dogma, I suppose it doesn't take much to think of oneself as "punk." Datapunk boss Rother shows off his own work alongside fellow Moroder/EBM/industrial heads like Gregor Tresher, Billy Nasty, and the much-welcomed Miss Kittin and The Hacker. There's no denying that Rother maintains a good sense of dread over rib-hitting beats, but the energy runs dry with its electroclash clichés and unintentional camp. Steer clear of this while sober. *Cameron Macdonald*

WAYFARING STRANGERS: GUITAR SOLI

Numero Group/US/CD

A collection of solo finger-picked acoustic guitar recordings from the 1970s may not seem the obvious move for The Numero Group, the Chicago label known for releasing obscure soul and freak-folk. But *Wayfaring Strangers* is more than just a disc of emotive and gorgeous—not to mention technically astounding—guitar songs; it's a reassessment of an entire genre of cottage recordings, one in which "obscurity" was a level of fame most only aspired to. Like Brad Chequer, whose masterful cassette-only recordings find their first digital release here. Or Scott Witte, whose "Sailor's Dream" has all the proficiency and vitality of a Norman Blake or John Fahey (*Wayfaring's* saint), but who recently finished a sophomore album—27 years after his first. *Justin Hopper*



Eutobom Rex Williams



Photo courtesy of Soundway Records

NIGERIA SPECIAL: MODERN HIGHLIFE, AFRO-SOUNDS & NIGERIAN BLUES 1970-76

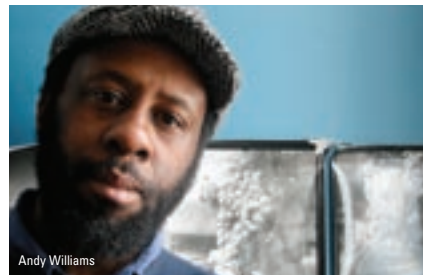
Soundway/UK/2CD

For many, Nigerian music starts and ends with Afrobeat emperor Fela Kuti. Nothing wrong with that, but placing Kuti in the context of Nigeria's thriving 1970s musical renaissance reveals a universe of similarly regal artists. The double-disc set *Nigeria Special* is an ideal telescope through which to view the fabulous 1970-76 highlife, Afrofunk, and grassroots sound galaxy. Groups like The Funkees, Mono Mono, or Eutobom Rex Williams show Nigerians tuned in to the era's politically inspired youth-culture explosion, and producing soulfully rocking music. Elsewhere, The Hykkers ride a psych groove and The Don Isaac Ezekiel Combination's sublime, blues-sax take, "Amalinja," sounds like a Nigerian Pharaoh Sanders. Likewise, The Semi Colon's funky *makossa* number "Nekwaha," and Tony Benson's organ-driven soul on "Ugali" are both stellar. Five years and tons of dusty master tapes in the making, *Nigeria Special's* music feels as fresh, funky, and liberated as ever. *Tomas Palermo*



Broken Business By Peter Nicholson

FUTURE JAZZ AND BUSTED BEATS



Bruk is dead. Long live bruk. Those were my thoughts when I heard of the sad demise of one of the scene's chief purveyors of goodness, Goya Music Distribution. Falling victim to the CD-R, the file-share, and the DJ who's too damn lazy to carry crates of actual vinyl records, this London distributor had to close up shop after a decade. The community vibe lives on over at coopr8.net, the web-forum/label where you'll find *Cooperation III: Sampler V* (Cooperation). The highlight of this comp is none other than **Modaji** who returns with the aptly named "Stepper," pairing brisk snares with righteous horns and a growling bass.

In tribute to the dying art of vinyl, I must give a shout out to Public Transit Recordings and their latest, "Monk Swing," a tribute to the great Thelonus curated by **Andy Williams**. Only available on limited-edition 12" black crack, I'm feeling its contribution from **Eval Manigat**, "Ra-Monk," some uptempo dance jazz that shudders and shakes with sax and vibes all aflutter, is the one I'm feeling most. PTR also has a good one in *LAL: The Lost Remixes*, which has a subtly swinging **Alister Johnston** track and a scorcher from **Moonstarr**.

Keeping on the jazz tip, but with a Tropicalia slant, check out **Pavlov & Mishkin** (of **GAMM** fame). The "Rata Del" 12" on Rebtuz Records has a multitude of mid-tempo swingers, with "Bailando" rising to the top with its call-and-response vocals and oddly Middle Eastern vibe (probably due to the clarinets).

Yesking is the band, Yesking is the label, and yes, king, it's full of ruff 'n' tuff dancehall flavors with just enough of a busted beat to let me squeeze it in here. With **Mark Rae** of **Rae & Christian** teaming up with **Rhys Adams** and a gaggle of MCs, "Champion Sound" promises a great taste of their live show, which allegedly will see U.S. shores in the spring.

Ever since I wore out two cassette copies of *Blue Lines*, I've always had a soft spot for **Massive Attack**, so I was rather stoked to get ahold of the latest single from **4Hero** on Raw Canvas/Milan Records, which features a fantastic remix of "Morning Child" by none other than **Daddy Gee**. With a laconic breakbeat and droning guitars, it's a radical, ominous revision.

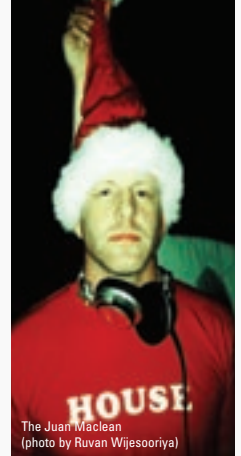
Different, but with a kindred cinematic vibe is **Protassov's** *Steam & Oil* EP for Switchstance. With plenty of live instrumentation (dig the guitars!) and rough-edged breaks, Protassov calls on **Flevans** (TruThoughts) and **Dr. Rubberfunk** for remix duties, offering some predictably funky effects.

On the very mellow, time-to-call-it-a-night vibe, I've fallen for **Butti 49's** "Flying" (Exceptional) as remixed by **King Knut**. It's spaced-out, with almost Thelonus-like keys and wandering vocals by **Emo**—shuffle-sci fi-soul that reminds me of Spacek. Great stuff from the guys from Stavanger, Norway and the perfect way to bring this to a close. Peace.



En Tu Casa By Nick Chacona

HOUSEKEEPING: FROM TECH AND MINIMAL TO DEEP AND TRADITIONAL



As the minimalist overtone that has blanketed dance music for the past few years continues to wane, the nostalgic influence of '90s house music continues to grow. The re-appropriation of the elements that made that period a special time in house has yielded a flurry of energetic releases.

One of the labels that has capitalized on this trend is the mighty DFA, with releases such as **Hercules & Love Affair's** "Classique #2" (which would have made an ideal lead-off point for **Jeno's** legendary San Francisco 1993 mixtape *Inside the Mind*) and the still-massive piano-driven "Still Going Theme" by **Still Going** friends **Olivier Spencer** and **Eric Duncan**. **The Juan MacLean** is up next with the aptly titled "Happy House," heavily influenced by the powerful crowd reactions to classic tracks during his DJ sets. Remix honors here are bestowed upon N.Y. re-edit dons **Lee Douglas** and **Prince Language**, both of whom utilized this opportunity to rework "Happy House"'s entire instrumentation and arrangement with superb results.

London's **Toby Tobias** will be returning to the Rekids imprint with the *Nervoso* EP, consisting of four tunes that bear a distinct 21st-century production style but wouldn't be out of place amidst a selection of early Warp releases. One of the more thought-provoking releases I've heard in a minute.

Nublu Records will be releasing the second part of the *Istanbul* series from label boss Ilhan Ersahin's **Wax Poetic** project. The "Cihangir" remixes consist of a moody nu-disco rework by **Ghostnote**, a tribal-tech version by **Underground Resistance's** **DJ 3000**, and a groovy "eclecto" house mix by **Brennan Green**. Built around a skanking guitar lick and an uptempo walking bassline, Green's version intertwines an underwater melody with a mélange of phasing, dubbed-out vocals to create a leftfield dancefloor odyssey.

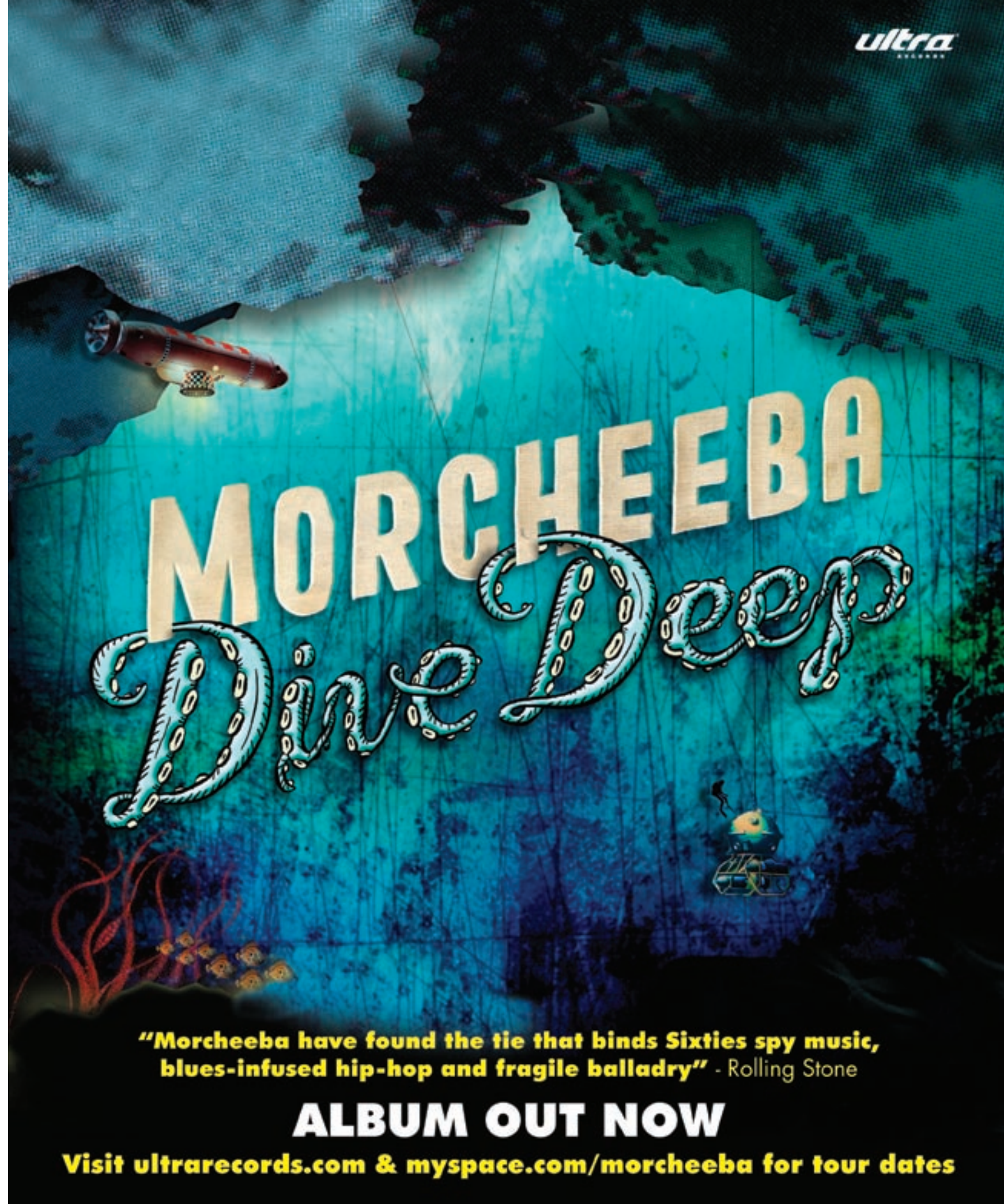
Continuing on his streak of collaborations with emotive female vocalists, **Dennis Ferrer's** latest project on his Objektivity label is a collection of remixes by Norwegian songstress **Ane Brun**.

The all-star cast of mixers includes the **Martinez Brothers**, **Abicah Soul**, **Joe Claussell**, **Jerome Sydenham**, **Henrik Schwarz**, and **Quentin Harris**. Harris has also teamed up with Shelter's **Timmy Regisford** for the next Objektivity single, to be released this spring.

On to the tech side of town, Berlin-by-way-of-Montreal ex-pat **Deadbeat** makes his debut on **Mathew Jonson's** Wagon Repair imprint with "Eastward on Mecca." The "Mecca" original mix and "Mecca Drum Jack" shoot straight for the dancefloor with bass and drums in lock-step, while "Mecca Dub" filters and flutters in a mood reminiscent of **Dub Taylor's** Force Tracks output.

Another Canadian imprint, Soulstream Records, run by Toronto locals **Martino** and **Suges**, is set to release its next EP exclusively on traxsource.com—**83 West's** "My Sound." These two mixes are on the deep and Afro-inflected tip, centered on dreamy synth pads and melancholic leads, for those darker emotional moments in your set.

Once again I end this column with an R.I.P. to four house-music institutions that are now casualties in the transformation to the digital age. U.K. distributors Amato and Goya, NYC house-music mecca Dancetracks, and Canadian pressing plant MMS all closed their doors in the last months of 2007. It will be quite interesting to see what 2008 holds for the rest of the old guard of the flat, black, and circular.



MORCHEEBA Dine Deers

"Morcheeba have found the tie that binds Sixties spy music, blues-infused hip-hop and fragile balladry" - Rolling Stone

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After Silence By Martin De Leon

THE OUTER ORBITS OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC



Why? (photo by Sarah Cass)



Liars



Growing

Screens are sometimes louder than speakers. That's why this month DVDs rub up against some of the freshest boombox-abusing singles I could find.

Two laptops are better than one, as Brooklyn post-Fennesz duo **Growing** illustrates with its *Lateral* EP (The Social Registry). "Swell" is full of big-hearted, hazy ambience that begins with simple blankets of noise and ends with helicopter synthesizers. "Lateral" is all chopped-up and glorious guitar noise that's just begging for an indie film production to give it a good home.

Did I say film? How about San Francisco's avant-spazz **Mike Patton's** collaboration with Norwegian composer **Kaada** for *Live* (Ipecac), the only concert DVD I've ever wanted to see twice. Grainy, noirish footage of the duo balancing beautiful pop yelps and percussive abstractions is the perfect visual soundtrack to, say, life in an Italian mental ward in the 1940s.

Argentina does it different, though. A slow, infectious rhythm called *cumbia*—one I just happened to grow up with (that now spans Columbia, Mexico, and Peru)—found an electronic experimental cousin in Dutch-born singer **Dick Verdult**. **Dick el Demasiado** is based out of Buenos Aires and uses IDM and his Eno-esque voice to re-interpret *cumbias* on three albums of Autechre-meets-Los Mirlos bangers, including his latest one, *Al Perdido Ganado* (Tomenota).

But if you want to keep it local, Oakland's **Why?** drops a dope remix EP, *The Hollows*, on Anticon. *XLR8R* cover boy, **Xiu Xiu's** **Jamie Stewart**, sings his heart out over microbeats on the remix for "Yoyo Bye Bye," while **Boards of Canada** adds a lush, pretty remix of "Good Friday" and **Nick T. of Islands** does the same on the gorgeous "Broken Crow." These folks should start a band.

Speaking of bands, Fort Worth's **The Theater Fire**, though, is a band that just might make you give a damn about folk rock. Winners of Sufjan Stevens' Christmas song contest, they pack a heavy punch of twangy piano and dark melodies on two previous albums, especially on their excellent *Everybody Has a Dark Side* (Undefinable). Their new album arrives soon, so check them out at theaterfire.com.

"Not more live concert videos, please!" you might beg, but when you see the **Liars** go nutso in Paris on their *Live at Everywhere* DVD and 7" picture disc (Heartfast) you'll wanna go outside and tip over a pretzel stand in revolt. I saw them at Warsaw in Brooklyn last year and the trio's bomb (in a good way) of a show is captured awesomely on this short DVD. They even did a cover of **Nirvana**, which floored me.

Canadian ambient producer **Tim Hecker** has rolled with the best of them on the famed Alien8 label. On his new EP, *Norberg* (Room40), his 20-minute live track has sprawling bass drones and **Philip Jeck**-like sheets of noise brought on by the Montreal native's apocalyptic laptop.

In other news, **Ray Tintori**, the young director of the Sundance fave *Death to the Tinman* made a great, psychedelic video for New York duo **MGMT** (whoismgmt.com/efvideo). You can even piece together the video yourself like a videogame. Also, check out **Fingered** (fingeredmedia.com), a DVD zine that filmmaker **Harrison Owen** started to turn a hobby into a community. Past issues have covered Brooklyn experimentalists like **Excepter**, avant-garde Mexican bands, and the latest Bay Area luminaries. Speakers or screens—as long as March is filled with mind-altering jams, we're doing okay.



Read the Label By Jesse "Drosco" Serwer

HIP-HOP MIXTAPES, WHITE LABELS, AND SHIT



K-Def (photo by Richard R. Ross)



Guilty Simpson

Broadway showtunes, Frank Sinatra, the score from *The Godfather*, Ethiopian music—mixtape DJs and producers have blended **Jay-Z's** *American Gangster* acapellas with everything imaginable. Most offer little more than a gimmick; the two following releases are the exception.

The concept behind **Mick Boogie's** *Brooklyn Soul*—each track samples Marvin Gaye—isn't particularly thrilling, considering the heavy '70s soul bias on the real *American Gangster* (The Hitmen's "American Dreamin'" beat even samples Marvin's "Soon I'll Be Loving You Again"). Cleveland mixtape kingpin Boogie defers production duties on *Brooklyn Soul* to German pals **Shuko** (the dude responsible for Keith Murray's irie banger "Hustle On") and **The Gunna** who, instead of just plundering Marvin's hits for cheap thrills, offer inspired board work that will have you looking at Jigga's already lucid rhymes through an even clearer lens.

Best known for his early '90s work with the **Lords of the Underground**, **K-Def** arguably belongs in the same class as DJ Premier and Pete Rock but remains one of hip-hop's most underacknowledged beat masters. Fresh from lacing **KRS-One** with one of 2007's toughest tracks in "The Teach's Back," the soulful, poignant instrumentals on K's remix effort, *Real Live Gangster*, suggest this could be the year K finally gets his props.

Rhymefest and **Mark Ronson's** Michael Jackson-inspired *Man in the Mirror* is another free internet gem, and not just because of the hilarious faux conversations cobbled from vintage MJ interviews. More than just raps over Mike and J5 samples, Kanye's ghostwriter and Amy Winehouse's producer, respectively, deliver some album-ready material that should stoke anticipation for Fest's *El Che* LP.

Two years since his passing, **J Dilla's** influence feels more prevalent than ever. In fact, in Europe, a whole community of beat-makers has sprung up with the "Detroit GOAT" as their primary inspiration. Parisian collective **Detroit Concepts** clearly

takes some cues from Dilla and friends, but their "Psycho" b/w "Feel the Funk" (D3CCPT) hardly sounds derivative. The a-side features real-life Detroit **Guilty Simpson** but it's the goofy, off-beat "Feel the Funk" that's the freshest.

J-Live's "Practice," offered in two versions (**Jazzy Jeff's** "Magnificent Mix" and **Marco Polo's** "Spaghetti Bender Mix") on his *Reveal the Secret* EP (BBE), turns basketball star Allen Iverson's infamous 2002 press conference blow-up ("Not a game... We talking about practice!") into a golden hook. Oh, and the whole EP knocks.

Boston MC **Akrobatik** delivers a nice teaser for his upcoming *Absolute Value* LP in "Put Your Stamp on It" b/w "Be Prepared" (Fat Beats) which features yet another beat from the Dilla vaults (and Talib Kweli) on the a-side and reunites **9th Wonder** with former **Little Brother**-mates **Phonte** and **Big Pooh** on the flip. It offers arguably the subtlest rap boast of all time: "Packing New York City spots on Wednesdays." Gotta love that line.

Mystique is a rare trait among rappers in the MySpace era but New Orleans' **Jay Electronica** has it in spades. Electronica's "Eternal Sunshine: The Pledge," an MP3 originally made available through his MySpace page (now you gotta find it through Google), is highly unorthodox. After several minutes of testimonials from Erykah Badu ("I wouldn't even call him a person because he's a weird looking cat... He looks kinda like he's an alien from somewhere.") and Just Blaze, dude spits some seriously twisted raps with Twista-like speed over Jon Brion's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* score, sans drums. Interplanetary.



Photo by Guillaume Simonas

Hip-Hop Guest Reviews: Ghislain Poirier

To simply throw Montreal producer/DJ Ghislain Poirier into the hip-hop category hardly does him justice (but we had to put him *somewhere!*). Sure, he's worked with MCs of all sorts (Beans, Face-T, TTC), but his productions over the past seven years have spanned genres, coming out on minimalist experimental labels like 12k and Intr_version, and more bass-heavy places such as Chocolate Industries and Ninja Tune (where his latest, *No Ground Under*, appears). Where Poirier gets craziest, though, is on his *Bounce Le Remix* mixtapes and at his irregular club home, Bounce Le Gros, at Montreal's Zoobizarrre venue, where you'll catch him playing any of the bangers below. *Ken Taylor ghislainpoirier.com*

PETTER
"FRESH" (FEAT. AFC)
Universal/US/12

A major rapper in Sweden, Petter is back with a huge banger from his *Goddamn!* album. Combine the monstrous horns of "Simon Says" with an uptempo "Pass That Dutch"-vs-"Lip Gloss" beat, add Swedish rapping on top and you have an instant classic—plus, anyone who can rhyme "Wayne Gretzky" into a track deserves respect. *Ghislain Poirier*

OMNIKROM
"ÉTÉ HIT"

Saboteur/CAN/12
Montréal's Omnikrom (two MCs and a producer) rap in Québécois and they're ready to conquer the world. "Été Hit" (literally, "Summer Hit") is a deep synth-and-808 bass-crunk track that makes everybody bounce here in Montreal. Their video on YouTube shows how much they love barbeques, bananas, and parties! A must. *Ghislain Poirier*

EGO SYSTEM
MOTELLA FEAT. LITTLE FREDDY & SO FAST
white/FRA/12

This active crew from Paris recently released an album and "Motella" is *the* track on it for me. I'm really into soca these days, but I need hard-edged soca to be satisfied. This track makes me really happy—especially the 150-bpm soca/ragga beat with grime stabs and tuff Creole vocals. *Ghislain Poirier*

CADENCE WEAPON
IN SEARCH OF THE YOUTH CREW
Upper Class/CAN/12

I'm definitely not a fan of the four-on-the-floor disco/Justice sound, but when you have a *real* rapper—I mean a *real good* rapper who can ride it properly like Canada's Cadence Weapon—well, it changes everything and I'm down with it. I can't wait to hear his second album. *Ghislain Poirier*

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Make Space By Ross Holland

LEFTFIELD DANCE, DISCO, POST-PUNK,
AND EARTHLY WEIRDNESS



In Flagranti



Mental Overdrive

I can't even remember the last time I received a promo that didn't involve at least two countries in some way. Produced by a dude in England, remixed by a Frenchman living in New York, released by a label in Norway—Thomas Friedman jokes aside, the dance scene is as worldly as ever, and who can complain?

Certainly not **Sasa Crnobrnja** or **Alex Gloor**, the New York-via-Switzerland duo better known as **In Flagranti**. *Grand Central Shuttle* (Codek), their latest 12", is a four-track doozy that touches on minimal funk, choppy disco, and some seriously tantalizing French female vocals. And, of course, the cover art features yet another home-wreckin' nudie. On the remix tip, In Flagranti adds a hand to the latest EP from French dance-rockers **Naïve New Beaters** with their restrained, spacey "Stoner Mix" of NNB's "Live Good."

Sticking with the Big Apple, **Runaway** (a.k.a. **Marcos Cabral** and **Jacques Renault**) follows up its last release on I'm a Cliché with a local outing on fellow New Yorker **Brennan Green's** Chinatown Records. The cut is entitled "Alberg 30" and it only further exemplifies these dudes' wizardry at undercutting expectations of "new disco" with fantastic, moody production. Mean Mr. Green hasn't been sleeping either. Aside from remixing **Luke Solomon's** "Demons at the Disco" for Crosstown Rebels, his production credits can be found on **Freddie Mas'** latest release, "Tails of Prevalence," a punk-funk head-bobber.

The Norwegians don't stop either! Early '08 finds Love OD dropping some fine releases from label-head **Per Martinsen's** **Mental Overdrive** project as well as Kraut-disco bizarros **The Oscillators**. And for the love of God, do not miss Mental Overdrive's new 12" featuring "The Rage" on the top side. Twelve minutes of paranoid space disco with a huge tongue-in-cheek Detroit techno breakdown? Yes, please. Look for a vinyl release on **Prins Thomas'** Full Pupp label, and in digital form from Love OD. Speaking of Full Pupp, get ready for another mid-tempo burner from **Blackbelt Anderson** with his "Sirup" 12", featuring Thomas on the b-side with his trademark "diskomiks." Rumor has it Blackbelt's debut album is in its final stages—keep notice. And what's news from Norway if there isn't any mention of **Lindström** or Feedelity? Well, if you haven't already bought yourself a copy of **Dominique Leone's** debut EP on Feedelity, then you're a sucka (seriously, it's epic). Not only is Leone a fellow San Franciscan music critic, but he makes some darn good leftfield Afro-disco, too.

Back in Paris, Dirty Edits maestro **Pilowski** has teamed up with **Benjamin Morando** to form **Discodeine**. Watch out Padded Cell! Their debut, *The Discodeine EP* (Dirty), takes back the term "dark disco" with a vengeance. "Tema di Gamma," on the a-side, is just about the slickest nod to John Carpenter yet. In a similar vein, **The Hasbeens'** previously limited cut, "Make the World Go Away," finally gets an official release from Holland's Clone Records on the *Keep Foolin' Yourself* 12". Vocoder-soaked, but without a wink of kitsch, these three tracks find propulsive robot-disco going pop.

Lastly, be sure to keep an eye out for **Una Aventura**, the latest project from **Salvatore Principato** of **Liquid Liquid** fame. Judging by their upcoming two-sider on Berlin's Terranova Records, expect a lot of percussion. Boom!



Basic Needs By Kid Kameleon

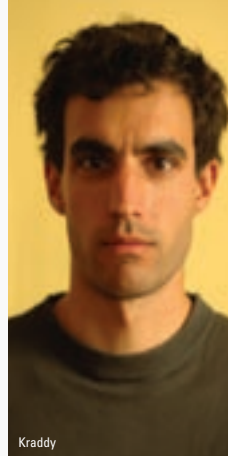
LOW-END NECESSITIES, FROM RAGGA
TO DUBSTEP AND BEYOND



Electromeca



Boreta



Kraddy

So much good bass music this month from all genres that it's hard to figure out where to start!

I mentioned **edIT** and **Ooah** a couple issues back, and now three more Glitch Mob members have excellent releases. **EPROM's** got the *64 Bytes* EP out on Addictch Records (that's right, it's the record label of the music download site). Simple but awesome, the music sits somewhere between glitch, 8-bit, and hyphy, and rocks along in a jolly, blippy style. **Boreta**, meanwhile, kicks it up a notch with "Bubblin' in the Cut" b/w "Lobegrinder" out on Glitch Mob Unlimited (also available through Addictch). Bouncy and sure to cause a stir on the dancefloor. Finally, **Kraddy** has collected many of his best remixes together on *The Illegal Album*, giving everyone from Capleton, Beanie, and Cham, to Busta, Dre, and Jahcoozi the re-rub. It's available from his website (kraddydaddy.com), all buzzin' and bubblin'. Add to that Kraddy's downloadable "remix kits," a zip file of each part of each track to let you make your own remix, and you've got a pretty innovative, top-quality release.

Jumping continents and styles, **Malorix** has his *Sound System Culture Clash* EP coming out on Rotterdam-based Redrum Records. I mentioned Malorix about year ago when I heard his awesome fusion of breakcore, hip-hop, and Roma music on **Maga Bo's** *Confusion of Tongues* mix. Now Malorix has 10 blindingly original tracks that represent the best of the multi-music scene in multi-cultural Rotterdam, and they're well worth seeking out. Check malorix.nl for all the info.

Also on the extreme end of things, the world finally sees another EP from **Electromeca!** The last taste we got of his flat-but-funky chopped beats was on Peace Off's *Battling Doll Beats* in 2004. Now *The Brutal Funk EP* has been released on Bristol's DeathSucker, and every track pops. It sounds like **Rotator** getting in a fight with **Kurtis Blow**. Great stuff!

Jumping quickly to dubstep, two important names to point out. One is the awesomely unique

Quarta 330 from Tokyo. Lost in the justified hype around the new **Burial** album, his release on Hyperdub—an 8-bit reworking of dubstep that includes a remix of Kode9's "9 Samurai" and an original track, "Sunset Dub"—was easy to miss. There's nothing else out there like this. Check myspace.com/q330 for more. Also, the Subsonic label out of Manchester came with some heaviness in late '07 with **Sarantis'** "Why Dem a Fight" b/w "Outlaw Dub" and **Biome's** "Agitated" b/w "State of Emergency." Sarantis will have the crushing "Society" b/w "Eclipse" out soon—all tracks that do well in both dubstep and breaks sets. Check myspace.com/nextleveluk for the rest.

And I can't believe there hasn't been more press around this, but Boomkat, the online record store, has an entire exclusive album of remixes of **Thom Yorke's** 2006 album *The Eraser*. Check the roster: **Various Production**, **Surgeon**, **Christian Vogel**, **Modeselektor**, **Four Tet**, **Burial**, **The Bug**, and **The Field**. Zowie! Yorke's voice sounds great in the hands of these masters, and every track is a winner, full of wildly beautiful and darkly fractured sounds.

Also, The Bug, **Warrior Queen**, and **Flowdan's** much anticipated *Poison Dart* EP is out from Ninja Tune, coming like heavy metal meets dubstep. **South Rakkas**, **DJ Baku**, **Skream**, and **Stereotyp** all provide stellar remixes, but it's hard to touch the original, which holds "tune of the year" status for me.

A final note: I gathered my picks for 2007's best dubstep tunes together on my Aim High/Aim Low DJ mixes. Check kidkameleon.com for links, if you're curious.



Photo by Paul Fiction

Bass Guest Reviews: Malente

Don't let the raved-out IDM-reminiscent robot on the cover of his mix disc *Whow* fool you. German DJ/producer/remixer Malente (a.k.a. Christoph Götttsch) is no lazer-obsessed futurist or darkwave-electro geek—he just has a thing for interplanetary fun (or so his releases on the Moonbootique label might suggest). Whether he's threading together bass-bin-banging disco grooves or freakin' the shit out of Louie Austen and Shout Out Out Out, Malente's penchant for bringing the bassiest, spaciest bits out of everything from house to indie rock is perfectly demonstrated on *Whow* (Unique). For an even better idea of how he rocks the club, though, catch him almost every weekend somewhere in Germany, sifting through the crates and pulling out the gems below. *Will Tobin* m-a-l-e-n-t-e.de

BENI "LOVE SEE"

Relish/GER/12

From Headman's Relish label comes former Riot in Belgium member Beni (who's actually from Australia) with his solo project. "Love See" is a great boogie-disco track with some French-house attitude, and a solid groover that brings plenty party mayhem at the same time. If you dig "The Acid Never Lies," you'll love this new anthem. *Malente*

AZZIDO DA BASS DOOMS NIGHT REMIXES

Kontor-Luscious Sounds/GER/12

Crookers made my 2007 come alive with their infectious, well-produced madness and their great ideas never stop. Their spaghetti-western take on "Dooms Night," a track originally from 2000, is amazing. But Azzido himself delivers an even more breathtaking mix that doesn't so much update the classic as offer up a whole new track instead. One of the tracks that'll make my Best of 2008! *Malente*

HUORATRON "DOLLAR DOLLAR TROOPERS"

New Judas/FIN/12

On the hyped-up New Judas label comes Huoratron, a Finnish version of Boys Noize or Justice. For me, even better than the great original is the slightly more club-friendly Lars Moston and Duncan Whitely remix. Sounds like you're playing an old-school vid-game over a pumpin' beat. Listen to the breakdown, which culminates in double-time gabba armageddon. Mayhem! *Malente*

MARKUS LANGE & DANIEL DEXTER "COMBAT ROCK"

Television Rocks/GER/12

"Combat Rock" follows Dexter & Lange's slammin' "Shooting Tigers" and "Acid Kids." This one is louder, harder, and dirtier than their previous releases—hardly German electro anymore. "Combat Rock" is an energetic stomper with weird, glitchy "Dancel!" shout-outs and a bassline that commands you to bang your head. *Malente*

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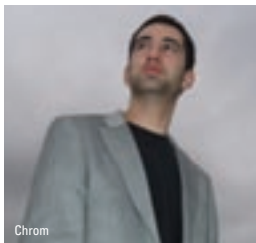
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Bubble Metropolis By **AL Tronik**

TECHNO: MINIMAL, BANGING, AND BEYOND



Chrom



Yapacc



Gel Abril



Kreon and Lemos

About this time last year, my records were just settling into a new apartment. Well, once again I find myself typing this column surrounded by boxes, milk crates, and Ibuprofen. But it's 2008, baby. Not even the mortgage crisis can stop this techno train from rollin'.

The first offering of March comes from S.F.-based Auralism Records. **Coalition of the Killing's** "Too Many Machines" is a Euro-tinged deep cut featuring several twists and turns that eventually reveal vocodered speech before snapping back to the beats. Be sure to peep the remixes by **Franklin DeCosta** and **Argenis Brito**.

Also deep and bubbly is **Gel Abril's** *Your Face Is a Mess* EP (Be as One). I've been playing this one out quite a bit, since the a-side is a smooth yet hard-charging workout, and the b-side is more mid-tempo and strange. The latter features a subdued druggy vocal from a guy at a club chastising a girl for her personal appearance. Men!

The shape of things to come in underground dance music is likely a more organic sound, if **Kreon and Lemos'** piano- and clarinet-touched *Lookosphere* EP (Resopal Red) is any indicator. All three tracks here are atmospheric without being too experimental, and are definitely on some **Luciano/Villalobos**-type shit. The only drawback is the vinyl pressing is pretty limited, so it might be easier to find it at online retailers.

The record that beats the *Lookosphere* EP for single of the month is **Yapacc's** *Second Life* (We in Rhythm). This guy was able to meld minimal techno, house, and two-step garage into a 10-minute opus that won't leave my box for a long time. Definitely secret-weapon status.

With the cost of living being what it is these days, I always try to look for the most bang for my buck. That's why compilations like *Home Sweet Home* (Upon You) are so handy. This four-tracker features music from **Format:B**, **Guido Schneider & Jens Bond**, **Luna City Express**, and **Resmann & Meinhardt**. Be sure to check for Luna City's tribal chant, "CDG," as well as "In Order to Dance" from Guido & Jens. Solid dancefloor stuff.

Another compilation to cop is the *Milkshake* EP (Minibar Music). It features three tracks from up-and-comers **Spasm**, **Seuil**, and **Linc**, as well as one by French minimalist **Cabanne**. Each track works very well on the dancefloor, so play them all if you get the chance.

Many of you aren't playing vinyl anymore, but I still do. Part of the allure is the artistry: the artwork, the label, and even the secret messages sometimes found in the inner groove. **Chrom's** latest, *Cygnat Glace* (Sushitech), is such an example. The sounds here are slightly experimental yet still jacking'. I like "Existence" on the b-side the most.

Also on the experimental tip is **Benno Blome's** "Eramina" (Eramina). I've been listening to a lot of mid-'90s ambient lately, and this one's right up that alley. This single actually plays more like a full-length album; side a is just under 10 minutes and "Expedition Eramina," the beatless track on the flip, clocks in at 20-minutes-plus.

Back down on earth you'll find *Tumble Blur*, the new EP from **Dan Ghenacia and Chris Carrier** (Adult Only)—nice techno-house from one of France's most consistent underground labels. "Delving Deeper" is the best track here and is great for getting people away from the bar and onto the dancefloor.

And rounding out this month is a shimmering effort from **Rone**. *Bora* (In Fine) is an impressive, synth-heavy release that sounds influenced by Border Community. Check the sub-harmonic melodies on "Flesh." This guy takes simple ideas and turns them into some real thought-provoking stuff.



Downbeat Diaspora By Rico "Superbizzee" Washington

GETTING YOU UP ON THE LATEST IN R&B FUNK, AND SOUL



Clutchy Hopkins



Muhsinah

The dawning of Spring 2008 is a time to tighten up your game and fine-tune your goals. A time to clean out the cobwebs and look at things from new perspectives. Most of all, a time to get your groove back. I trust that these funk 'n' soul jawns will lead y'all in the right direction.

At press time, Chocolate City's R&B swagger is officially on orange alert! For the alternative-soul fiends, the mind-bending algorithms of **Muhsinah's** digital full-length debut, *Daybreak*, should satiate your jones! And for the grown and sexy, **Raheem DeVaughn's** sophomore release, *Love Behind the Melody* (Jive), delivers the goods like UPS on a good day! Make no mistake—the dream is real!

In addition to dropping **Van Hunt's** third album, *Popular*, this season, Blue Note Records is dropping some science. *Droppin' Science* is yet another funky installment in the label's hip-hop sample encyclopedia continuum, committed to schoolin' suckas on the origins of hits by **Mary J. Blige**, **A Tribe Called Quest**, **Brand Nubian**, **Madonna**, and more! Check this month's compilation reviews, then cop the vinyl or digital download and get three bonus tracks!

With **John Legend** at the pitcher's mound, England's R&B siren **Estelle** attempts a smokin' homerun with her sophomore joint, *Shine* (Home School/Atlantic). The debut artist on Legend's fledgling label, Estelle's **Will.i.am**-produced first single, "Wait a Minute (Just a Touch)," is chill, but the real knock is the dancehall jam "Magnificent" featuring Canadian MC **Kardinal Offishall!**

In attempts to shake off them haters and doubting critics, **Erykah Badu** reemerges with the laid back "Honey," the first single from her upcoming fourth studio album and double-disc set *New Amerykah* (Universal/Motown). Let's wait and see what other tricks 'n' treats E. Badu might pull out of her headwrap, like the **Madlib**-produced buzz cut "Real Thing (Music Is Everything)."

Being that Daptone Records' patented throw-back sound was responsible for some of 2007's

most notable joints, Scion A/V decided to honor Daptone on Volume 19 of its mixtape series with a double-disc tribute. Disc One features nine remixes by the likes of **Mark Ronson**, **Hank Shocklee**, **DJ Spinna**, **Kenny Dope**, and **Large Professor**, while Disc Two gets you up on the original versions by **Sharon Jones and The Dap-Kings**, **The Budos Band**, **The Sugarman Three & Co.**, and **The Daktras**.

Deep in the heart of the city of brotherly love, there lies a forgotten reservoir of soul. The elders of the land often speak of a time when this funky reservoir pumped messages of hope with synco-pated soul through the veins of this nation. Nearly 30 years later, Legacy/ Sony BMG Recordings has tapped into this well resulting in *Conquer the World: The Lost Soul Of Philadelphia International Records*. Zeroing in on the first decade of the label's existence, this compilation features unreleased gems from **Carolyn Crawford**, **Bunny Sigler**, and more.

Let's talk about **Clutchy Hopkins**: progeny of a Motown recording engineer, political revolutionary, shaman tutee, gun-runner, multi-instrumental everythang man! Ever since **MF Doom** spit hot fire over six prime cuts from *The Life of Clutchy Hopkins* in 2006, Hopkins' funky folklore is back on the radar. Get ready for the next pitch as Ubiquity Records releases *Walking Backwards*, featuring guest appearances from labelmate **Darondo**. And if you think the MF Doom collabo was ill, download the **UGK** mash-up from the ubiquityrecords.com!

Aight, my folks, that's it for the time being. If thangs keep up they way they're goin', I'll have a truckload of goodies to unload on y'all next time! Stay tuned...

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Lucky 13 By Toph One

TophOne spins at the RedWine Social at Dalva, White Label at Madrone, and Funkside at Nickie's every week in S.F.



From the film *Bomb It*: Tracy Wares films Sexe at work in Barcelona, Spain.



Bing Ji Ling

It was a damned surreal bikeride home at 5 a.m. in one of the worst storms in half a century. I left my Auntie's deathbed at UCSF in a daze, and was soon in a slo-mo crawl up the hills towards home, soaked to the bone and fully expecting to be obliterated by a falling tree. The gamut of emotions was in overdrive—from raucous dinners and bowling with cousins and old friends, to dizzy holiday benders to amazingly beautiful train rides through the snow-packed Rockies and Sierras. The Great Prankster can be cruel that way, throwing so much life at us all at once to confound and confuse. What this calls for is a weekly soak at the Kabuki Hot Springs, and the restful knowledge that Auntie Jan now has 50-yard-line season tickets next to Bill Walsh for the great 49ers in the sky. *Zivjeli!*

1. BING JI LING JUNE DEGREES IN DECEMBER

To the Curb/US/CD-EP

Have you ever wondered what it would sound like if Steely Dan and Stevie Wonder got in a white Alfa Romeo Spider with a bottle of champagne, some brie, and a little cocaine, and sped off over the Panoramic Highway for a picnic on the far side of Mt. Tam? Boy, I have.

2. THE EMPEROR MACHINE

"SLAP ON" B/W "GANG BANG"

DC/UK/12

DC's releases consistently warp my brain and shake parts of my body I didn't know I had. Call this post-No Wave, 21st-century polyrhythmic dub funk if you must; I'll call it "my theme music." Long-hauling, heady grooves for the road trip of Life.

3. NICK ANDRE AND E DA BOSS PRESENT

"EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF"

Slept On/US/12 EP

Four fat tracks (E. with Gift of Gab, Backyard Bangers, Woodstock, and DJ Enki) in the fun-tempo zone (100-110-ish), while Jern Eye and Nebulus flow over Nick Andre's lazy-ass "Trunk Slumpin'" for a ride around the hood. It's *all good*.

PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY

4. SSM BREAK YOUR ARM FOR EVOLUTION

Alive/US/CD

After a puzzling opener, this Detroit trio piles it on for an astonishing second half. Blazing punk and garage take over on "Let's Make a Baby," "Now We're Six," and "Emotional Tourist," but SSM is in all its fuzzed-up glory on the monster jams "Marian" and "Underground." It helps if you believe Iggy Pop is really a soul singer and that the MC5 were a dance band.

5. KUTIMAN KUTIMAN

Melting Pot Music/GER/LP, CD

Tel Aviv's Kutiman brings the deep Afro-funk vibes on this debut. From the slinky "Chaser" to the summery Tropicalia of "Once You're Near Me," the young producer is joined by live percussion, horns, and vocalists for a warm, well-seasoned sound.

6. GHISLAIN POIRIER "BLAZIN FEAT. FACE-T"

Ninja Tune/CAN/12

Heavy-as-fuck ragga-bounce from Montreal. Pick up the full-length, *No Ground Under*, for the weirdo electro-bleep of "It's a War War War" and the arabesque "Exils."

7. HELIOCENTRICS "DANCE OF THE DOGONS"

Now-Again/US/7

Bugged-out space-jazz from the same universe that gave us Sun Ra's deepest and grooviest explorations. Makes you want to dance like the *Peanuts* gang (or Tim "Love" Lee—they stole each other's moves).

8. BANGERS AND CASH "PUSSY"

Downtown/US/12

Spank Rock and Benny Blanco bring Luke Skywalker and the crew into the new millennium, and strippers everywhere are glad. It's a beautiful thing how well this mixes into house, should you feel the need to go in that direction.

9. THE PIMPS OF JOYTIME HIGH STEPPIN

Wonderwheel/US/CD

You want to be in the place when the Pimps lay it down live, but this record will do nicely in their stead. Try the Afro-tinged beats of "My Gold" or the poppy Latin funk of "Hey Mr. J," or my pick, the blues workout on "Long Ride."

10. 33HZ PRESENTS

"PARIS, TEXAS" (FEAT. DEVIN THE DUDE & TEKI LATEX)

Dither Down/US/7

Nice slinky funk from DJ Raze that's perfect for the midnight hour. Cop the 12", too, for remix heat from Gentlemen Drivers and Max Pask, here outshining personal favorites In Flagranti and Architecture in Helsinki.

11. NICOLAY & KAY "TIGHT EYES"

Nicolay Music/GER/12

Smooth hip-hop with sultry backing vocals and Oh No on the guest verse. Works well on rainy mornings with a cup of warm tea. Houston's Kay shines.

12. GUILTY SIMPSON "GETTING BITCHES"

Stones Throw/US/12

Detroit ruffnecks rule the day with Almighty Dreadnaught Guilty Simpson's no-holds-barred rhymes paired up with Mr. Porter (Dr. Dre/D12) on the triumphant production tip. If I ever enter a Roman arena to do battle with lions, I want this shit playing loud.

LUCKY 13. BOMB IT

Antidote International/US/DVD

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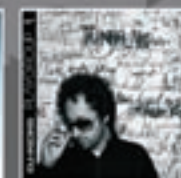


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IN THE STUDIO: THOMAS BRINKMANN

THE VETERAN VINYL PROVOCATEUR PIMPS POP AND LETS THE MUSIC SPEAK FOR ITSELF.

WORDS: KEN TAYLOR PHOTO: THOMAS BRINKMANN

Minimal techno icon Thomas Brinkmann is probably more of a gearhead than he lets on. A peek into his studio reveals some of the most high-tech stuff we've seen, but it's the last thing he wants to talk about—if pressed on the topic, he'll more than likely lie his way through it (tongue in cheek, of course) to get to talk about his artistic process.

Over the course of countless albums, 12-inches, and high-art sound experiments, the German native has established himself as the Dalai Lama of thinking-man's techno. His thoughtful soul and funk deconstructions as Soul Center bring more than just James Brown and African-American spiritual samples to the dancefloor, just as his reinterpretations of Mike Ink's and Richie Hawtin's minimalist works (crafted with his home-modified three-tone-arm turntable) could hardly be considered simple remixes. So what does he have in store for trimming the fat from pop music? His latest album, *When Horses Die*, released on his own Max Ernst label. It's a paean to Nine Inch Nails, Joy Division, and Suicide, where he exposes pop's insides, and swaps in his own goth-y vocals and poetic verses from the likes of Robert Smithson. Here, we do our best to get behind the complex structure of Brinkmann's studio approach.

XLR8R: WHERE IS YOUR STUDIO?

Thomas Brinkmann: In the Eifel region of Germany [near Cologne]... Nobody knows, really! It's just a big forest and a nature reserve. More trees, less people, no city, no village—and no Beefheart.

WHAT IS YOUR BASIC STUDIO SET-UP?

I use Martion speakers—the one and only. Nobody knows them in the States except that Canadian, Mr. Hawtin. Some computers—both PC and Mac. A Rickenbacker bass, Fender Stratocaster, Gibson Les Paul Custom, Gretsch drums, stupid name-dropping [laughs]... all the gear I could never play... I don't care much about studio set-ups. They don't fit in a notebook [computer]. I do not have one of these guitars or drums in reality, but in my mind. Pro Tools, *ahhh!* Eventide, *ooh!* Gibson, *wow!* I listen to music done with nothing and it's more touching. *That* matters. All this gear is a crutch to get there.

WHAT INFLUENCED *WHEN HORSES DIE*?

I mention some on the cover—Trent Reznor ("Right Where It Belongs" and others) and Winston Tong—but [you won't] find something of theirs on the album (except Tong's lyrics)... I just listened to them, Stina Nordenstam, Joy Division, Viktor Zoi, Zemfira, and some others.

WHERE DID THE DESIRE TO USE YOUR OWN VOCALS COME FROM?

From poetry... and 'cause I cannot sing. You can find vocals in my other productions, but not the way I use them on *Horses*. It's another step.

DID THE TRACKS COME ABOUT RELATIVELY QUICKLY, COMPARED TO YOUR TECHNO TRACKS?

They did come quickly, but it took me a lifetime, really... You have to end up here with the whole story [already written]... I don't wanna talk about techno, though. It's boring to talk about it. Better to play it.

DO YOU TRY TO SEPARATE MUSICAL ART-MAKING FROM MAKING DANCE MUSIC, OR DO YOU SEE THEM AS THE SAME THING?

Art is art and everything else is everything else, like Ad Reinhardt said. But I also agree with Joseph Beuys or John Cage by saying the contrary, [that everything can be art]. Merce Cunningham, Cage, and dance music... fortunately, there is more to it than just Detroit or Cologne, techno, house, hip-hop, or whatever.

SO THEY'RE EQUALLY IMPORTANT?

It's like asking, do you see Norman Foster and carton architecture [homeless people using plastic and packaging], let's say, in Tokyo, as equally important. For who? For the people inside? For visitors? For representation? I just care about my needs, and if there is a hypothetic alter ego somewhere who can share this or use it in a way, that's a good thing.

IN THE PAST YOU'VE CARVED INTO RECORDS AND USED CUSTOM-MADE TURNTABLES TO CREATE NEW SOUND SOURCES. WERE THERE ANY SIMILAR TECHNIQUES USED ON *WHEN HORSES DIE*?

While I was producing this album, lots of electronics around me died... The generator in my car, my mobile phone, a Vestax filter, two transformers, one hard disk, a monitor, a buzz saw.

HOW ABOUT SOFTWARE? IS IT STILL WORKING?

Finally the Native Instruments hotline helped me to install the Akoustik Piano. It was driving me crazy. Also the guy from HGF was nice. I use their ProtoPlasm, Shuniji, and STS 26 synths.

ON "MEADOW," ARE THOSE ALL ELECTRONIC INSTRUMENTS OR SOME REAL ONES TOO, LIKE LIVE BASS?

That's a funny question, about virtuality: If your senses don't get it, there is no reason to ask me whether it's "real" or not. It seems you took it to be real and you should maybe doubt your senses. There are "real" instruments but I don't know what real means anymore.

Thomas Brinkmann's *When Horses Die* is out this month on Max Ernst. max-ernst.de



IN THOMAS BRINKMANN'S STUDIO: VESTAX DWG-X1 FILTER, HGF SHUNIJY SYNTH, MARTION ORGON MONITORS

ARTIST TIPS: THE PLASTICIAN

While Chris Reed (a.k.a. The Plastician) cut his teeth playing U.K. garage, grime, and dubstep on London's pirate-radio circuit (and later on BBC1 Xtra), his productions on his own Terrorhythm label show his restless spirit and desire to push his style in all directions. The Plastician's dark, lurching beats—from the atmospheric Occidental noir of "Japan" to the booming "Intensive Snare" (featuring MC Skepta)—are versatile, techno-tinged DJ tools that fit perfectly next to all your favorite bass monsters. His secret weapon? A simple PC-based program called Fruityloops. Here Reed offers five solid tips on getting the most out of the software, but for a taste of what he does with it, check him out on rinse.fm every Monday from 11 p.m. until 1 a.m. GMT.
Derek Grey

1. BUILD A SAMPLE LIBRARY.

One of the key things you'll need when making beats in Fruity is a good collection of samples, particularly of drums. You'll be pretty limited to what you can do if you only use the preset drum kits offered by the program. Other samples and FX can come in handy to add interesting parts to your tracks, too, so scout around online, record straight from your own collection, or purchase sample CDs to build a library.

2. EXPORTING LOOPS AS AUDIO.

If you find Fruityloops is eating up your CPU, it's important that you export as many MIDI patterns as possible into audio loops. These loops can then be used in separate audio channels in the timeline, which will take up a lot less CPU than the original MIDI sequences do. Make sure that you get a good level of volume on your loops so that they are easy to mix down and will ensure you get the best sound.

3. MASTER YOUR TRACKS.

A lot of people comment on the "tinny" sound they get out of Fruity when compared to programs like Cubase or Logic. I find a good mix of EQ and compression can really help the overall sound of your tracks before they are exported to WAV files. There are loads of effects modules included in the program, so play around with them and take time on your mix-downs and eventually you'll obtain the fatness of other powerful production tools.

4. USE THE CORRECT DRIVERS.

Another CPU problem that pops up as your tracks become more busy can be easily sorted out by selecting the correct driver for your sound card. There are various free drivers available online. I used the free ASIO driver, which I obtained from asio4all.com. This runs smoothly and ensures you'll have fewer problems with memory.

5. MAKE USE OF VSTs.

One of Fruity's great attributes is that it supports the usage of external VST plug-ins. Having a wide selection of virtual synths will add further dimension to your arsenal of sound-production capabilities. There are plenty of places online where you can download freeware virtual synths. A good place to start is vstplanet.com, which has a wide selection of synths and effects units to choose from.

myspace.com/plastician



Danzai *Iceworks* drops a unique voice into the mix of the Dub Techno revival. Three dubbed out voyages fit for the dancefloor or the lounge. (XDR008)



Countered *How It Is* "If you think this is how it's gonna be..." Countered will show you How It Is across five tracks of club oriented Acid and Techno. (XDR009)



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ATLAS SOUND *let the blind lead those...* krank114 02.19.08

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AUTISTIC DAUGHTERS *uneasy flowers* krank115 03.03.08

"beautifully brushed percussion, tenderly plucked strings and softly spoken vocals conjure up scenes of fallen leaves on a damp autumn morning." *Dusted*

VALET *naked acid* krank116 03.03.08

"Valet's noise becomes less about strings and more about the history of electricity itself." *paperthinwalls*

CHRISTOPHER BISSONNETTE *in between words* krank118 04.04.08

"Bissonnette works on an introspective level, building pellucid arrangements that suspend you, breathless, in a perpetually meditative state." *Earplug*

CLOUDLAND CANYON *lie in light* krank117 04.28.08

"...a relentlessly churning state of hot-wired, serpentine restlessness..." *Textura*

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SEVENTH HEAVEN

ABLETON LIVE 7 PRODUCTION AND PERFORMANCE SOFTWARE

Why is it that the only thing people seem to love more than the current version of Ableton Live is to discuss, argue, moan, and offer their two cents about improvements that *need* to make it into the next major update.

Fortunately for all of us, the folks at Ableton have listened, and fit a number of users' suggestions into version 7. First off, now you can have multiple time signatures within a live set, which will surely be a boon to all post-Genesis electro-prog-laptop longhairs. All that video you warped and edited in Live 6? Now you can export it as an external file. Multiple automation lanes per track, dedicated "tempo-nudge" buttons, integrated REX support... I hope all you whiners appreciate this stuff. Did I mention side-chaining? Finally, Ableton Live supports side-chaining! *Quiet please. Stop applauding. Sit down. The show's not over yet.*

Other welcome additions include an enhanced 64-bit audio engine, a hot new vintage-style compressor, a spectrum analyzer (awesome!), and easier hardware integration (now you can insert hardware devices into a Live device chain the same way you would a software

plug-in). The new Drum Rack makes it simple to assemble and manipulate custom drum kits. You can drop any sample, multi-sample, or even software instrument into a Drum Rack slot, and Live automatically assigns it a MIDI note and links it to a dedicated device chain.

If you've got deep pockets, the Ableton Suite adds many, many, many gigabytes of sample libraries, instrument collections, software instruments, and other goodies. Electric, Analog, and Tension notably offer incredibly accurate, synthesized models of electric pianos, analog synths, and strings, respectively.

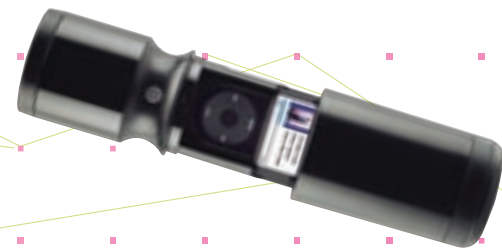
In the end, Ableton Live 7 represents a substantial upgrade over the previous version. But is it a *must* upgrade? That depends on your needs, of course, but the Drum Rack and hardware integration alone warrant serious consideration. Will I buy it? They had me at "side-chaining." *Roger Thomasson*

MSRP: \$499 (Ableton Suite: \$799); ableton.com



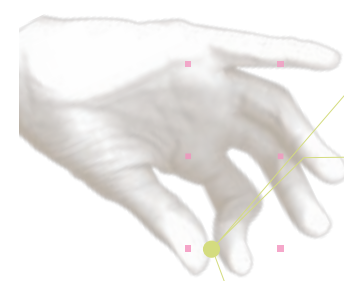
M-AUDIO GFORCE VIRTUAL STRING MACHINE PLUG-IN

Before the days of polyphonic synthesis and high-resolution sampling, loads of string-based synthesizers were created to emulate the complexity of an orchestral string section. While most of these classic units are rare and unpredictable, the folks at M-Audio have captured over a dozen of the vintage machines in this single plug-in, giving users the tools needed to develop lush string performances of all sorts. Compiling over 3,200 samples, this plug-in houses sounds from the famed Freeman String Symphonizer, ARP Omni 2, ARP Quartet, Crumar Multiman, Moog Polymoog, Korg PE-2000, and many other rich symphony simulators. Once you select a given sound set, the module acts as a sampler, hosting your chosen sample and giving you the power or synthesis to edit and personalize the string tone. Grab a preset and soon **you too will be jamming like Pink Floyd, Air, The Cure, Parliament, and Stevie Wonder.** *Praxis*
MSRP: \$179; m-audio.com



IHOME2GO IH85B PORTABLE IPOD SPEAKER SYSTEM

Listening to your iPod with headphones on while driving is pretty ridiculous (though, yes, people do it). Doing it while cycling is downright idiotic. With the iH85B Cyclor, though, iHome makes it possible to bring your iPod along on bike rides in a safe manner, *sans* headphones. This battery-powered speaker unit, which fully encloses any iPod, affixes to your bike frame like a water cage would, and kicks out some pretty decent sound. **It's not crystal clear, but with the roar of traffic, what's the difference, really?** A wireless control pad that attaches to your handlebar offers volume and track up-down functionality. And that's about it—it's a super-simple piece that's yet another iPod accessory, but serves a somewhat useful purpose. The only complaint? With four AA batteries and an iPod, this already large unit can add significant weight to your carbon-fiber racing bike. *Derek Grey*
MSRP: \$79.99; ihomeaudio.com



ARTURIA ANALOG FACTORY VERSION 2.0

Finding a collection of analog synths in one application is about as common as the urge to cut yourself every time you see the prices on vintage hardware of decades past, but few can top Arturia's Analog Factory Version 2.0. This VST/standalone plug-in offers all of the French company's painstakingly crafted replicas—the MiniMoog V, Moog Modular V, CS-80V, ARP 2600 V, Prophet V, Prophet VS, and Jupiter-8V: a total of 3,500 different modifiable sounds (1,500 more than before). The Factory is **not only friendly to the wallet, but friendly to the user's brain**, allowing for easy browsing with its Preset Manager, and organizing sounds by type, instrument, CPU usage, and personal favorites. This massive (and massively affordable) collection's only downside? A Syncrosoft Protection USB dongle, which we've pretty much run out of space for. *Fred Miketa*
MSRP: \$249; arturia.com



SKULLCANDY SK PRO DJ HEADPHONES

Skullcandy's got the market covered on color-happy, mid-level DJ headphones, to be sure. Even the most basic sets are either lined with leopard-print, sold with adaptable headssocks, or are painted up in some rather gawdy fashion. That aside, for their relatively meager price, these SK Pros perform pretty nicely. Good, rich tone comes through across the spectrum, and **even that hard-to-reach digital low-end, like a poorly encoded Mobb Deep MP3, sounds decent** enough. The comfort of these cans is a subjective thing—my ears and head were aching a bit after three or four songs, but for wear-and-tear, Skullcandy is pretty unbeatable: Even if you discount the crap out of them, they'll replace them at a 50% discount. Rage on! *Ken Taylor*
MSRP: \$74.99; skullcandy.com



PUREMAGNETIK CIRCUIT:30 SOUND LIBRARY

Somebody's gotta take the lead role, and **if it's a legendary synth-pop band you're trying to helm, Puremagnetik Circuit:30 is your torch.** Joining their Analog Bass, Sting Machine, and Microdrum sound-patch collections, Puremagnetik takes on that vintage synth heavyweight, the Moog. That instrument and its antecedents provided lead sounds and textures for Gary Numan, Yaz, Depeche Mode, Client, Ladytron, and Adult., among others. Derived from 100-percent analog Moog sources and formatted for Ableton Live, Kontakt, Logic, or GarageBand (EXS24), Circuit:30 contains 30 multisampled instruments with modifiable effects and control processors. Simply drag and drop a sound patch into an empty MIDI channel in Live, and play your own lead riffs straightaway, including laser-beam attacks, swirling, arpeggiated sweeps, and glistening stabs. Download this patch and lead your group to glory. *Tomas Palermo*
MSRP: \$5.75 (monthly subscription); puremagnetik.com



GRIFFIN EVOLVE WIRELESS SPEAKER SYSTEM FOR IPOD

When I first saw the Evolve wireless speaker set, I thought all of my problems had been answered. If there's one thing that drives my wife—and my landlord—crazy, it's the amount of holes I've put in our walls to mount numerous hard-wired speakers throughout our apartment. Evolve was to be the answer. Even if these little guys only pushed out 12 self-amplified watts each, I could still move them anywhere within 150 feet of their base. Awesome, right? Sure, until I turned them on. Tinny to the point of utter frustration, the Evolves just didn't stand up to even the simplest sonic challenges. Their mobility and RF reception was great, but their sonic range was incredibly narrow, and everything from my iPod to my vinyl (when hooked up through my stereo's amplifier) sounded sub-par. **Now I'm as big a believer in evolution as Mike Huckabee.** *Derek Grey*
MSRP: \$299.99; griffintechnology.com

LICENSE TO THRILL

Activision's Tim Riley pulls off some of the music industry's biggest coups.

WORDS EVAN SHAMOON ILLUSTRATION AUDREY KELL



Tim Riley has a sweet job. His title, "Worldwide Executive of Music," sounds serious and, to some extent, it is: Riley is ultimately responsible for all of the music licensing for videogame publisher Activision's entire stable of games, from *Guitar Hero* to *True Crime* to *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*. He brokers million-dollar artist deals, rubs shoulders with the likes of Jay-Z and Interscope's Jimmy Iovine—basically, he's one of the major players in the ever-growing intersection between games and music.

Set deep in the back of Activision's cubicle farm in Santa Monica, CA, Riley sits in his black matte sanctuary; a converted recording room transformed into a soundproof workspace, it has been visited by Johnny Rotten, Slash, and Cut Chemist, among others. Awards, autographed *Guitar Hero* controllers, and more eBay-worthy music paraphernalia than you can shake a sensor-loaded drum stick at cover the walls, along with boxes and boxes of albums that Riley receives each day for possible inclusion in Activision's games.

Less than 10 years ago, getting artists to lend their music to game soundtracks—never mind creating original music for them—took begging, pleading, and plenty of cash. These days, things are a whole lot easier. Riley has more weight to throw around than anyone in this industry—a level of power that once belonged to scions of the record industry. Now, the artists come to him. As we chat, Riley's email inbox dings with a message from Wyclef Jean, requesting a meeting.

But not everyone gets to email directly. "There are a few different ways for bands or artists to get their music

into Activision games," says Riley, "but the most common method is really just to send us a CD. We spend a lot of time at live shows, reading the trades, music magazines, and websites, and even looking for unsigned acts on MySpace—it's super-important for us to see where the music trends are, and to try to deliver our customer the absolute best music possible in all the Activision releases."

Riley came to Activision with more than a decade of street cred; he's worked at Jive, Giant/Revolution, Warner Bros., and Geffen. All the A&R hustle paid off: When he started doing freelance music consultation for Activision, he already had established relationships with artists and labels, which made getting big names into games infinitely easier. Activision gave him the go-ahead to create an internal music department at the company—arguably the first of its kind.

With the next generation of gaming consoles, Riley believes we've just begun to scratch the surface. "These new machines give us so much more space and speed to work with," he says. "It allows us to host more music-based content, and with the downloading capabilities they offer, I think we've only just cracked the seal on downloading music through games."

"It's been said before, but I kinda like the analogy: Videogames are becoming like the new college radio," he continues. "You want exposure? Get on the *Tony Hawk* soundtrack, and everyone who plays it will hear your song a million times."

Of course, much of how the actual licensing deals work depends on the individual title. "Without getting into

particulars, I can tell you that with a game like *Tony Hawk*, most all of the music is licensed on a non-exclusive buyout term—and with a music-based game like *Guitar Hero*, the music is licensed under a royalty-type of agreement. And the fees will differ from artist to artist."

Riley got Jurassic 5 to create an original song for the *Fantastic Four* trailer, and worked with Swizz Beatz on a slew of original remixes for *Shark Tale*—"Car Wash" and "Play That Funky Music," to name a couple. He's working with Radiohead on some stuff he can't talk about—and that's just the tip of the iceberg.

And certainly, logistics can't be ignored. "There have been so many situations where we've got things set to work with a band, and they literally just can't find the masters," says Riley.

Sometimes the deal simply gets scrapped, but other times there are alternate avenues to explore. Riley enticed Living Color to re-record "Cult of Personality" for *Guitar Hero*, and guitarist Vernon Reid even added a part to make the song harder to play. But of all the coups Riley has staged, convincing the Sex Pistols—who hadn't been together in the studio in about 30 years—to re-record "Anarchy in the U.K." at the Dust Brothers' Los Angeles compound may be his biggest, boldest move yet. With this sort of power, Riley may just be singing a different tune in the years to come: "Videogames Killed the Video Star."

Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock and *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4* are out now from Activision.
activision.com

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XLR8R picks the hottest videogames and gear of the month.

WORDS: RYAN RAYHILL



As children, we often argued with our friends about which of our favorite videogame characters would win in the ultimate battle to the death. A stupid argument to be certain, but one that Nintendo knew needed an answer. And with **Super Smash Bros. Brawl** (Nintendo; Wii) all the biggest names in gaming—from Mario to Sonic to Solid Snake—can slap the piss out of each other until there is only one left standing. At least until you play again. And you will.

The original *Devil May Cry* put its hack 'n' slash acrobatic stamp on the PlayStation 2, creating a new gaming icon (the bad-ass half-demon, Dante) and helping to propel the system in its early days. After some highs (*DMC3*) and lows (*DMC2*), **Devil May Cry 4** (Capcom; Xbox 360, PS3) follows a new protagonist, Nero (who mysteriously looks nearly identical to Dante), as he uses an oversized sword (like Dante) to battle demons (like Dante) while wearing a stylish leather trenchcoat... kinda like Dante.

Next up: killer space dinos from the future! **Turok** (Touchstone; Xbox 360, PS3), who has dropped the "Dinosaur Hunter" title he held from the '50s to the '90s, returns to take out a rogue general (and former comrade) who has overrun a newly discovered planet rife with prehistoric predators. The story-driven first-person shooter features some great voice talent from Ron Perlman, Donnie Wahlberg (NKOTB Rulz!), and *Deadwood* alums Timothy Olyphant and Powers Booth.

The latest entry in the popular futuristic racing series, **Wipeout Pulse** (Sony; PSP) features all new tracks, modes, and weapons to equip your wildly fast hover-cars with while doing loops at 300 mph. *Wipeout* has always been known for its soundtrack's focus on electronic music and this one features bangers from the likes of Aphex Twin and Stanton Warriors.

After finishing the crazy (and we do mean *cuh-razy*) *Killer 7* in 2005, developer Suda 51 (born Goichi Suda) began work on **No More Heroes** (Ubisoft; Wii), described as his most violent game, and likely his—or anyone's—kookiest. You star as a dirt-poor nerd named Travis Touchdown who lives in the fictional town of Santa Destroy, California (yes, you read that right). After winning an internet auction for a "beam katana," you agree to assassinate a guy named Helter Skelter and thus begin cutting people in twain, spilling their innards, and removing their heads. Suda needs a powerful strain of weed named after him. Immediately.

When the creator of *Final Fantasy*, Hironobu Sakaguchi, started his own company, Mistwalker, people wondered if he would be able to create the kind of mind-boggling RPGs that he had in his near 20 years with *FF*. Sak's latest, **Lost Odyssey** (Microsoft; Xbox 360), looks to live up to the hype. Playing as a man punished to live for 1000 years, you follow his life through many generations leading up to a

point when society is on the brink of a "mystical industrial revolution." Sounds groovy, bro.

We miss the *X-Files*. Truly. Chatter about a new movie this year has given us mixed feelings, sure, but until that film either sates our Scully deficiency or eats our faces like that one episode with the flesh-eating bacteria, there's **Condemned 2: Bloodshot** (Sega; Xbox 360, PS3) to keep us scared/happy. As a disturbed former Special Crimes investigator, you are wrangled back into the force to look for your ex-partner who has disappeared under—what else?—mysterious circumstances. Expect plenty of *CSI*-like investigations along with first-person action as you unravel the creep-tastic story. Since the events of first *Condemned* left your character a hallucinating, homeless drunk, there is much more opportunity in *Bloodshot* for weirder shit to happen on screen, such as throbbing walls, tar men, and crazy hobos looking to smash your face with a brick. The game also features a multi-player "Fight Club" that allows you and your sadistic buddies to hack each other to bits in back alleys. Reminds us of college...

 Catch the weekly Loading... column at XLR8R.com/news.

1. **TUROK**
2. **LOST ODYSSEY**
3. **NO MORE HEROES**
4. **DEVIL MAY CRY 4**

Mathhead/Passions, Trouble & Bass www.troubleandbass.com

Photography by Brian Cleaver



DEATH ADDERS: Hell Rides in From the East
The Spring 2008 Collection





VIS-ED WILL SWEENEY

A British mastermind spends hours drawing weird vegetables, but never loses the plot.

LEFT
Isodea
Will Sweeney exclusive
for XLR8R Vis-Ed, 2008

Will Sweeney creates worlds where crime-fighting sandwiches battle villainous hotdogs—but don't think they're simply random. Each whimsical character in Sweeney's flawlessly executed compositions serves a greater purpose: to create funny social commentary that's never heavy-handed.

In Sweeney's 2007 print "Saturday Night," for example, you may spy a red pepper in glasses and jeans playing an arcade game called *High Speed Kumquat*; he's part of a larger tableau where anthropomorphic vegetables hang out and plot wars against junk food.

After graduating from London's prestigious Royal College of Art in 1998, Sweeney embarked on a prolific illustration career; he's doodled for the likes of Silas & Maria, Levi's, and Stüssy, and appeared in the Gas Book series, *The Face*, and *Sleazation*. Musically, he has made his mark as a guitarist for XL Recordings' Zongamin (the brainchild of frequent design collaborator Susumu Mukai) and by designing album art for Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks, Beck, and Architecture in Helsinki, whose *Places Like These* cover he spun into a full art show in Melbourne, Australia. Of course, there's the aforementioned veggie-filled *Tales From Greenfuzz* series of comics and its attendant toys, plus his recently launched label, Alakazam, an optical acid bath of dancing pharaohs and voodoo jukeboxes from the future past.

The London-based Sweeney talked to us about Judge Dredd, his art-professor dad, and how the cutting edge is getting old.

alakazamlabel.com



ABOVE
Attack On Rastapopolis
(Tales From Greenfuzz 2),
2006

Sticker Designs for Beck's
The Information LP, 2006

How did you first get into art?

I think one of the pivotal inspirations for me was the *2000AD* comic. It seemed to have everything for me, visually and narratively. There was a section in one issue that was a step-by-step guide to drawing Judge Dredd, using the same techniques as the comic's artists. I remember doing this in my school art class when I was about seven. The moment when the ink had dried and I rubbed away the pencil line was kind of a

revelation for me, giving me the confidence to think I could pursue this.

How did your father being an art professor affect the way you thought about art growing up?

I think it gave me confidence for quite a while; by the time I was around 15 I kind of took it for granted that I could draw. Then I really had the wind knocked out of my sails when I started art school, which was good as

it made me really try harder. I think my dad's position has made me distrust the fine-art world to some extent. He is also quite cynical about much over-hyped contemporary art, but he is successful in an area that is kind of alien to me. I have carved quite a different path than him in my career, but his work ethic has always inspired and driven me. Our work definitely bears many similarities. We both have a great love of detail and for creating characters. Thematically though, it



is different. His work involves themes such as the life of William Blake, cities of holy dreams, and swineherd philosophers.... I tend to make comic strips about a fictional world populated by vegetables.

Are you able to make a decent living from what you do now?

If I didn't live in the most stupidly overpriced city in the world I would probably consider myself quite well off. Most of the work I

really enjoy doesn't pay too well, but I have a good agent who can negotiate well on my behalf when the occasional soul-destroying advertising job comes my way.

Describe the process of a piece from conception to completion. How much is planned and how much is improvised?

In terms of illustration work, I will sit and look through books and magazines for ages, waiting for inspiration to come

before spending a long time drawing in my sketchbook. Then I will refine the sketchbook drawings [or] get client approval. Most of the commercial work I do involves digital coloring, so the process is penciling, inking, rubbing out pencil, then scanning and coloring digitally. So not too much has changed since the early days of copying Judge Dredd, apart from the computer aspect. In terms of personal work, the process is often quite different. I have a lot of images

ABOVE
Architecture In Helsinki, Places
Like This LP cover, 2007



LEFT TO RIGHT
Tales From Greenfuzz
Kebabylon! comic
book cover, 2005

Alakazam! Tokyo exhibition
poster, 2005



MAGICALWORKS SUSUMU MUKAI & WILL SWEENEY
AT BEAMS T HARAJUKU
FROM 10th JUNE 2005



ABOVE
Black Feast, 2005

and ideas that I want to explore through drawing and writing comics, and there never seems to be enough time to do this.

What does a day in your life look like?

I often like to work at night when there is no one around. I hate distractions and need to concentrate a lot. I work from home in Hackney, in a small studio on a mezzanine level of my flat. My wife works downstairs. Other than that, I drink Guinness, watch bands,

watch *Dr Who* DVDs, watch *The Mighty Boosh*, pursue bizarre trains of thought on the internet, buy obscure German vinyl on eBay, and have gyoza evenings at our place.

How much planning goes into your comic books?

A lot. Everything is storyboarded and planned before artwork begins. Saying that, I always allow for spontaneity and I never know exactly how a spread will look until inked and colored.

Otherwise it could get too laborious and predictable.

Why so many food references?

Food is an underrated subject matter. Outside the realm of children's books, most comics concern rather clichéd subject matter that panders to the inadequacies of the readers: revenge, power, six-packs, urban alienation. Food is familiar, yet I think it's quite alien. Who knows if aubergines have feelings?

Do you listen to music while you work?

I listen to the radio a lot, but mainly plays, stories, and radio comedy. I like Clive Merrison as Sherlock Holmes on BBC7, and I love "I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue" on Radio 4. Music-wise, at the moment I'm listening to the new Ween LP, Moebius & Beerbohm's *Strange Music*, Alice Coltrane's *Journey in Satchidananda*, Guru Guru's *UFO & Kangaru*, and Cluster's *Grosses Wasser*. Some of my favorites are The Cramps, The Bonzo Dog

Band, The Monks, and The Coasters. These have all inspired my work through lyrics, humor, and dress sense (or lack thereof).

What are you sick of, in art or otherwise?

Sometimes I really resent the "fashion" or "cutting-edge" aspects of contemporary illustration—people appropriating a style or palette merely to appear edgy. It's often just vacuous, hiding the lack of commitment

within. I'm also rather cynical about some of the old farts who haven't had an original idea in 20 years, but still knock out facsimiles of the same thing relentlessly to a blissfully ignorant audience.

• TBC:
Echoes of Karlheinz Stockhausen

The ambient world honors its most noted sound exploring heavyweight.

"Whenever we hear sounds, we are changed."
– Karlheinz Stockhausen

The validity of this simple statement, when applied to the work of eclectic German composer and panoptic music visionary [Karlheinz Stockhausen](#), who died last December at the age of 79, carries a profound resonance and clarity. After all, his philosophical approaches to composition, electronics, dub techniques, and musical theater have grown to become central themes in contemporary sound and music practice—even scoring him a spot on the cover of The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* LP.

Arguably one of the most controversial figures interested in the exploration of "sound in space," the mere mention of Stockhausen can polarize a room with amazing speed. At almost every level of his work (and life) Stockhausen created tension and flew in the face of accepted norms.

In music, his conceptual works challenged not only commissioning budgets, but also conventional taste and the very edge of countless musicians' abilities and patience. Take the 1995 "classic" Helicopter String Quartet, in which each member of the quartet played their part of the score in isolation, listening to one another through headphones, whilst flying in their own chopper—certainly not the most carbon-friendly performance piece.

Equally as shocking, Stockhausen's ill-articulated and ultimately misquoted comments about the "art" of the unfortunate happenings of 9/11 caused huge waves of discontent and unintended ramifications, from cancelled concerts to the eventual proclamation from his pianist daughter that she would no longer perform under her given name.

Ultimately, though, it's his contribution to the reinvigoration and reconstruction of musical understanding that will leave an indelible mark on 20th-century sound culture. "I can't think of another contemporary composer who has appeared in British sitcoms, been the bait to tempt people into at least acknowledging the avant-garde, and caused such a stir with both his music, words, and ideas," comments U.K.-based composer and conceptualist Scanner. "In his exploratory work, [Stockhausen] crossed the lines between structuralism, tape cut-ups, electro-acoustic experiments, and ambitious dramatic theatrical presentations, foreshadowing many of the shapes and sounds we commonly experience today."

His intensely methodical yet fanciful music drifted from post-serial-inspired works in the early '50s through to expansive explorations into electronic sound (including the incredible "Gesang der Jünglinge" and "Kontakte") and ultimately into opera—since 1978, Stockhausen spent much of his time working on the highly theatrical seven-phase operatic epic "Licht" (which, to this day, has yet to be performed in full).

For many, though, it's his work in the 1950s and '60s that solidified his place in sound culture. "When I hear early pieces," U.S.-based sound artist Stephen Vitiello surmises of Stockhausen's impact on sound, "especially 'Kontakte,' it's hard not to be amazed at all that he was doing—and often before anyone else. With those pieces, I feel like he was the first person who really made electricity sing. It's clear that he helped lay the groundwork for the future of electronic and experimental music."

The question now, of course, is: Who will fill the ever-increasing musical and philosophical void?

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